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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SINGING RIVERS

DALE DRAMAS

THE SHOEING OF JERRY-GO-NIMBLE

DALE LYRICS

DALE FOLK

THE BODLEY HEAD

KENSINGTON
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THE ROUNDABOUT

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FAIRINGS

A YORKSHIRE MISCELLANY

BY

DOROTHY UNA RATCLIFFE

ILLUSTRATED BY FRED LAWSON

LONDON:

JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LIMITED

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FAIRINGS

LIFE'S LIKE A FAIR

LIFE'S like a Fair: a vast of work before
A few hours' fun;
And long ere stars have wested over moor
Light's out, all's done:
But to us each, according to our daring
Time gives some Fairing.

THE YEARLING

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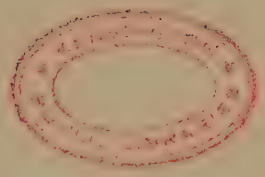
THE YEARLING

A CHAP from a circus came here to-day
And bought " Dale Lassie," our yearling bay
Filly, you'll mind, with two white feet
And bonnie head :
He seemed quite beat
At t'way she whinnied.
" By gum ! " said he,
" She's just the horse for our job, for she
Could larn ony trick."

" That's true," I said,
While she nuzzled my hand to be fed. . . .
I've been thinking it over ; was it right
To let her be trained for a circus sight,
She, used to fields, to be tied in a row
In a stuffy tent while time for her show ;
Trotted about on a sawdust ring
Decked up in feathers ;
It isn't the thing
I wanted for her.
Will she onderstand
Clapping of crowds and blaring of bands ?
Who knows, she may fancy music of drum
And bugle, and learn to care for the hum
Of hundreds of folk. . . .
And yet it seems
To me such things are onreal as dreams ;
Green grass below and above a lark,
The sun at dawn and the stars at dark
Are realer things ;
But he gave me a price
That I knew I'd never be offered twice !

BELLA RIDDLE



BELLA RIDDLE'S HOOP-LA

BELLA RIDDLE

AT most of the Yorkshire fairs and hirings you can see Bella Riddle and her Hoop-La tent. Originally, the tent top was scarlet striped with bright yellow, but the sun has mellowed it now to a rosy brown and amber, and when seen against a background of leafing elms and any old grey church tower, with a foreground of small stalls and coloured carts, Bella's tent is an attractive sight. It is a circular tent, and Bella herself sits on a stool in the centre and watches her

clients approaching through an avenue of motors, drays and carts. All around her runs a stall; to the north and west are laid out large objects like gaily-coloured flower-pots, small clocks, brushes and combs, mirrors, watch-stands and inlaid boxes. In order to win one of these useful objects you have only to throw a wooden ring over whichever article you fancy. Three throws for twopence—it is yours or not, everything depending on your own skill. To the south the stall is covered with black velvet, on which are placed diamond rings, ruby rings, plain gold rings and amethyst cat charms. Here you throw a smaller ring and get four throws for sixpence, and, if you win an amethyst cat, Bella, considerately, will change it for a ruby or sapphire ring, whichever you prefer. To the east, on the stall, is set out Bella's most attractive stock-in-trade, a dozen or so small glass bowls filled with water, and in each a lonely goldfish swims round and round and round. They are not really lonely, because each fish can see several neighbours swimming round in their respective bowls. If you wish to become the owner of a goldfish and a bowl, you have as many throws as you like, or can afford, at a penny a throw, with delightful blue and white or red and white celluloid balls, an inch in diameter. It looks quite easy to throw a celluloid ball into a goldfish bowl, but try and you'll see that the balls hit the neck of the bowl or the side of the bowl, and, being so light, they bounce from one neck to another but rarely will one drop into the water.

"Does anyone ever win a goldfish, Bella?" I asked, after a dozen non-successful throws.

" Oh, yes, Dearie. Whya, I lost three at Northallerton day afore yesterday."

Then for half an hour I watched other people try to throw balls into goldfish bowls, but they had no greater success than I ; yet, in spite of the difficulties of winning a goldfish, one after another people came up to try their luck.

I won an amethyst cat ; I won a stud box quite easily, but I had set my heart on a goldfish, and though I rested in between several series of throws by riding on the Merry-go-Round, I did not succeed in throwing a ball any nearer the water than the neck of one bowl or another.

" An' you do deserve a goldfish, t'way you've been trying so hard," sympathised Bella.

About half-past four trade became quieter, and Bella made preparations for boiling a kettle on a tiny oil stove. She turned to me and said :

" Things 'ull be quite for a bit ; it's milkin' time ; after that it'll liven up again." Then she made way for me to scramble under the stall, north by north-west, and, seating herself on her stool whilst I sat on an upturned box, we gossiped over a cup of tea.

This was not the first occasion Bella Riddle had given me tea. The first time was when her Jasper was a squealing bairn, in the days when she carried him in a shawl tied cross-wise round her shoulder, resting the child on one hip. He had yelled so much that day at being put down every time she attempted to make her tea that I had offered to hold him,

and she had invited me to share the tea with her. That was some years ago, and Bella now had several more sons and daughters (all black-eyed like Bella, all happy-looking, provided they were sucking sticks of barley sugar or something equally sticky) who dodged about under the horse's head and the wings of cars. They were nimble, healthy children, and Bella loved them.

A casual observer might remark, when Bella handed him four wooden rings for sixpence, "Here, at any rate, is a thoroughly happy and contented person." Sunburnt skin, large, fey gypsy eyes, white teeth, Bedouin profile, black tousled hair through which golden ear-rings showed when she moved her head, Bella Riddle was a striking figure. Usually she wore a black and white spotted handkerchief tied round her head; a great coral cameo brooch fastened her bodice, and her small, lithe hands were smothered with heavy gold rings. How quick she was with a hesitating client; the wooden rings were in his hands before he had even decided he wanted to throw them; then, too, with what a good grace she always gave her clients the prizes they won. If a wooden ring all but covered an object, she was ready to part with it, and this was a good business dodge on her part for how could you win one of Bella's amethyst cats and not have a few more throws afterwards.

When the Aunt Sally stalls had no clients, when the Coco-nut Shies were lonely, when the Shooting Gallery was deserted, when even the hub of the fair, the great Roundabout itself was sparsely patronised, Bella's Hoop-La always had a

laughing circle of people around it. It was Bella herself who attracted them, and once, over a cup of tea, I told her so. She turned quickly on me ; her dark eyes burned, her mouth sneered, and she said :

" *Me* attract them ! Don't you believe it. There's nothing about me to attract them. I can't even attract and keep my own man ; what's t'good of attracting strange folk, whose faces you don't even remember, whose voices you don't care to listen for, when t'one person in all t'world you want to keep is attracted by some one else ?

" Aye, by some one else ; I know maist folk would call her pretty. She's one of your pink and white sort—one of them silly little simpering creatures what can only say, ' Oh ! do go on ! ' She first saw my man when he was doing a stilt-walking turn, and she was going round dressed up in pink tights and a frilly skirt on t'back of an owd white horse.

" Aye, they took to each other reet fra t'start. Luve at first sight they called it, an' he left us to join her troupe, an' together they went a-touring in t'West o' England."

She paused a moment to flick a wisp of black hair out of her eyes, then continued bitterly :

" Eh ! dearie, it's better for a woman to be born bonnie nor aught else in this world. Blue eyes and curly yellow hair will carry a girl farther nor a quick brain or a good heart. Aye, a pretty lile red mouth an' a rosy colour do the trick ivery time !

" Do you think I could have luved him more nor I did if I'd been handsomer ! Nay, I couldn't, I couldn't. I luved

him so I niver minded how he beat me when he coom back drunk fra' t'Public ; an' he was an amusin' man an' was varra fond of company, was my man, Black Jack, an' folk was always a-treating of him.

" Nay, I couldn't have luved him more, but Aa ! if I'd been bonnier, fair and rosy instead of so brown, he might never have looked at her.

" He wur with her for a year, then he had an accident, fell from his stilts and was in hospital for seven months. *She* niver troubled to come and see him, not she ! She said as how she'd lose her job if she was away for a couple of days, an' after a while I brought him back to the North. When he got a bit better he started drinkin' again ; happen it was his disappointment 'at niver being able to do his stilt-walking turn again 'at made him so hard to get on with ; happen he was sore-hearted that she niver came nigh nor niver even wrote to ask how he was going on.

" Eh ! then followed a terrible time. I had to keep t'Hoop-La going—we'd five to feed besides ourselves, you'll mind—and he would be that violent at times I'd have to hide the kids from him for fear he would do 'em an injury. Things went from bad to worse ontil he died after an extra terrible bout. All that night he was raving, and his owd pals had to hold him down, but towards morning he got a bit quieter and asked me to open t'window so as to let sunleet in. Then he said, very gentle-like :

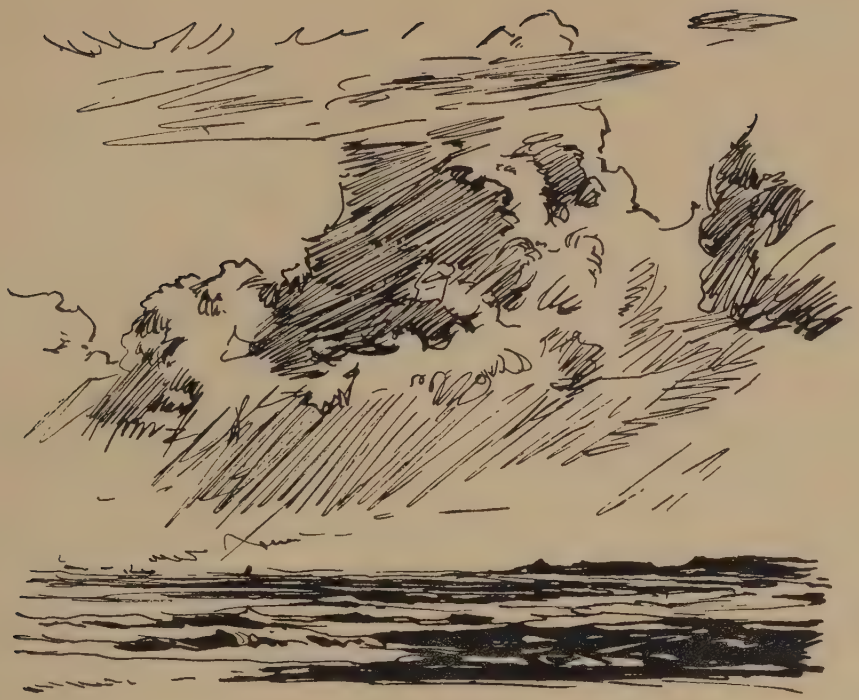
" ' Bella, I haven't deserved you ; you've been varra good to me,' and I was terrible fain to hear him say so,

but . . . though he died in *my* arms, he died wiv *her* name on his lips ! "

She flicked away another strand of hair from her eyes, then looked at me feyly and said :

" Dearie ! it's better for a girl to be born bonnie than to be born wiv a silver spoon in her mouth ; riches, goodness, luck, family and friends, nothing will help her in this world as much as being bonny."

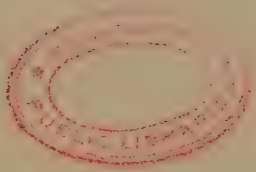
ON AN OLD MAP OF YORKSHIRE



ON AN OLD MAP OF YORKSHIRE

"*HERE stood Auburn, Hartburn, Hyde*"
Villages the sea has taken:
How many lovers were forsaken,
Laughed and sorrowed and loved and died
In sea-buried Auburn, Hartburn, Hyde?

THE BLIND MAN OF HILTUNE



THE BLIND MAN OF HILTUNE

THE BLIND MAN OF HILTUNE

(A ONE-ACT PLAY)

CHARACTERS :

BLIND BILL, *a big, unshaven man, about 70, with pale blue eyes and heavy features.*

ANDREW BOLTON, *a small man with white hair and ragged moustache and little twinkly grey eyes.*

MRS. PICKLES, *a neighbour.*

HETTIE *and two other children.*

HETTIE'S MOTHER.

TIME : *Morning.*

PLACE : *A cottage kitchen. On the high mantelpiece, right, are two brass candlesticks. In the corner near by are a brush and dustpan. Two photographs, taken about* 1880, *are on the walls on either side of a chest, right, which is a beautiful example of Dale Chippendale. There is a door at the back leading to a dark passage, and an old ladder-back chair and two upright ones of village workmanship complete the furniture.*

When the curtain rises, BLIND BILL *is discovered on his knees washing the worn oilcloth. A small fire burns in the grate, which is well-kept.* BILL *sings, or rather grunts, to himself as he passes the cloth backwards and forwards over the oilcloth :*

"Three blind mice—see how they run,
They all run after the farmer's wife——"

Outside he hears a trap going by.

That's Mrs. Greenhow's Dobbin ; he allus goes that way—one, two, three, and then four, as if he wur a bit lame-like in his off fore. Well, she can't expect him to go to Ripon market more nor one day in a week ; Dobbin's gettin' on in years, same as all on us.

"Three blind mice, see how they run,
They all run after the farmer's wife,
Did iver ye see sich a do in your life——"

He hears a child's clogs pitter-pattering down the village street.

That 'ull be lile Hettie goin' to draw mair watter. Whativer does her mother want wi' so much watter ? She keeps yon bairn, Hettie, runnin' fra' t'mornin' till t'neet, backards an' forrards, backards an' forrards. That woman 'ull use mair watter in one day nor t'other folk 'ull use in a week.

"Three blind mice, see how they run,
They all run after the farmer's wife,
Did iver ye see sich a do in your life
As three blind mice."

He ceases singing as he hears footsteps approaching his door. He hears two knocks, rises carefully, measures his steps and opens the door.

Is it you, Andrew Bolton ?

Enter ANDREW BOLTON.

ANDREW : Aye, it's me ; I'm on my way to feed t'hens, an' I thowt I'd call in an' pass t'time of day. Eh ! you're very cheerful this mornin', singin' an' all.

BILL : Cheerful, I'se allus cheerful ! No one iver heard me owt but cheerful. Cheersomeness is t'ony way to bear t'afflictions sent by t'Lord.

ANDREW : An' it's none so bad havin' sich afflictions wiv a lile house of your own an' a pension an' a 'lowance fra' Ripon. You've no call to worry whether hens is layin' or is not layin' ; you've no call to pass sleepless night a-wonderin' whether your cow will have another bull calf. Dang them bull calves, I say. I telled my missus it wur all her fault. If t'woman of t'house doesn't feed t'cow what's going to calve, regular like hersen, there'll allus be bull-calves.

BILL : Well, bull-calves is afflictions sent by t'Lord, an' it's time you should be reconciled to sich-like afflictions, Andrew Bolton, seein' as how yon cow of yourn has had three bull-calves runnin'.

ANDREW : Aye, but somehow one doesn't get used to bull-calves.

BILL : Well, sit you doon an' smoke your pipe while I git on wi' t'cleanin' of t'fender.

He goes to the corner cupboard and takes out a tin of Shino and a bit of rag; then he crosses the room, and, getting on to his knees begins cleaning the fender.

ANDREW (*lighting his pipe, then watching him*): Theer's not much goin' on in t'village. They've started another quoit club, but to my mind it's not much of a game. Yester evening I went down to Ing Meadow to watch 'em, but I doän't see partin' wiv a good shillin' so as to join t'new club.

BILL: Games is good if they're played at t'reet time.

ANDREW: Mrs. Garrowby, her aboon High Intake, has got her mother fra' Leeds stayin' wiv her. I've not heard how long she's stayin', but she's a maist townified-lookin' woman. I didn't take to t'looks of her when I passed her in t'street. Well, I mun make for off. (*He rises.*) By heck! I'd almost forgotten t'best bit of news! Dosta mind Yew House what has been standin' empty these months!

BILL: Aye.

ANDREW: Well, Yew House has been taken, an' if you guessed for a fortneet, you'd niver guess who has taken it!

BILL: Nay, I'm no good at guessing; but it will do Yew House no harm to be lived in after standin' empty these mony months.

ANDREW: I knew you'd be interested about havin' a near neighbour.

BILL: A neighbour?

ANDREW: Aye, a neighbour, a man named Reuben Williams.

BILL : Fra' what part does he coom ?

ANDREW : Nay, I've not heerd tell, but—sitha, he's—a—*blind* man an' all !

BILL (*stopping work, his face puckering with concern*) : A blind man, did you say ? A blind man ! You didn't say a blind man, Andrew ?

ANDREW : Aye, a blind man. You'll be reet grand company for each other, Bill.

BILL (*rising in a dazed way, the rag falling from his hand*) : A blind man !

ANDREW : Well, so long ! I'll try an' find out where he hails from and what sort o' man he is. So long !

He lets himself out.

BILL (*turning to the window on left*) : A blind man ! Aye, he said it clear as clear—a blind man.

Then he gives a queer gurgle and collapses on to his knees.

Oh ! Lord, hearken.

Isn't it enough that I have borne this Cross of Blindness for eleven lang years ? Must I bear an even girter affliction ? This Reuben Williams 'ull make all on 'em forgit me. He will be new to 'em an' his blindness 'ull be new, an' he'll be mair interestin' like nor me.

Oh ! Lord, hearken !

Send him to another village.

Grant, Lord, 'at he doän't fancy Yew House. It mun be varra damp standin' empty for so long.

Oh ! Lord, send Reuben Williams to Wensley, to Ulshaw, to Kirby, to onywheer in this dale save ony Hiltune.

Hearken, Lord.

I can bear t'affliction of blindness. Ears have become eyes for me, tiny chirrups under t'eaves make up for not seein' young birds wingin' backards an' forrards to t'nest ; smell of t'pinks an' t'feel of their frilly edges make up for not seein' t'greeny whiteness of 'em, an' t'touch of t'sun an' rain content me now I can no longer see sunleet or rain-fall. Lack o' sight I have borne patiently, Lord ; but oh, Lord ! another blind man in Hiltune I cannot bear.

Hearken, Lord !

I'm t'ony blind man 'at t'childer have iver set eyes on. Now they will have two blind men to bring their riddles to, an' their tales of their teacher's onfairness. T'women 'ull have two blind men to bake cakes for an' to tell t'stories of their husbands' foolishness, an' because I'm t'owd one wi' nowt new an' interestin' aboot me, I shall be forgotten.

Hearken, O ! Lord.

Soon no one will coom an' admire t'cleanness o' my floor an' t'brightness of my fender. They'll go admirin' t'oilcloth an' t'fender of t'other blind man.

He hears footsteps and listens ; then says in a low voice : That 'ull be Mrs. Pickles.

Raising his voice, he resumes his prayer.

Oh ! Lord, I wish him well, but in Thy girt goodness grant——

He breaks off and gets up from his knees as he hears a soft rap on the door.

A Voice Outside: It's me, Lizzie Pickles. May I coom in?

Mrs. Pickles *enters.*

Good mornin', Bill. Hope I'm not in the way, but it's bakin' day, so I've brought you a nice currant loaf same as t'one you liked so much last time.

She walks across to the corner cupboard and puts the currant loaf on a plate.

Noo, Bill, you must cheer up! Have you heard you're to have neighbours soon at Yew House?

She bustles around cheerfully, and picks up the rag which had fallen from Bill's *hands; she hands it to him, then looks at the fender.*

My! but your fender does you credit. There's not many sighted folks 'at could keep a fender as bright as you. You're a marvel, Bill; you're a fair marvel! Well, about t'new-coomers to Yew House, happen ye'll have heard already 'at it's taken by a man called Reuben Williams, a blind man an' his wife.

Bill (*going to the drawers and putting the rag and Shino away*): Aye! I've heard, so he has a wife, has he?

Mrs. Pickles: Aye! Doän't keep t'currant loaf too long, Bill. Cut into it while it's fresh. Well, I must frame for off. Baking day is allus a thrang day wiv us. D'you know (*she pauses at the doorway*) I've lost five of my Wyandotte

chicks. Andrew said he saw a rook get one on 'em. Well, so long, Bill, an' keep your heart high. No good ever came of being low-spirited.

BILL : I'm reet fain for t'currant loaf, Mrs. Pickles. You mustn't think 'at I'm ongrateful acause of my bein' a bit quiet-like to-day, but I've a terrible deal on my mind, an' I cannot find words of thanks so easy as on other days.

MRS. PICKLES: That's all reet, Bill. We all have our good days an' our bad days. Eh ! how time flies. I must be off now.

She bundles out and closes the door.

BILL (*sitting down heavily in the rocking chair*) : Then, it's true, an' I've got to face it. There'll be another blind man in Hiltune afore summer is wiv us. Whativer shall I do ? Aa ! whativer shall I do ! I must git on wi' my jobs, but whativer shall I do !

He rises and feels his way to a drawer and gets out a duster, then he goes to the door and stands in the sunlight. In a few seconds children's voices greet him.

FIRST CHILD : Hullo ! Bill, how are you ?

SECOND CHILD : Are you goin' to clean your window, Bill ?

FIRST CHILD (HETTIE) : Can't I stay an' watch you ? I like to see t'way you find all them lile corners, Bill.

BILL : Well, coom an' sit on t'wall while I clean t'window, Hettie.

HETTIE : I've another pail to fetch first, then I'll coom.

SECOND CHILD : Hettie's for iver fetchin' an' carryin' watter. It's a shame ; she doän't seem to have no time for laikin' same as we do. Bill, when will you play another game of blindman's buff wiv us ?

ANOTHER CHILD : Aye, there's no one can be blindman as well as you, Bill. All t'other grown-ups peep, but you can't peep, can you, Bill ?

BILL : Nay, I can't peep.

SECOND CHILD : I've heard as how there's another blind man comin' to live in Hiltune. He's got a wife an' he's comin' to Yew House.

BILL : Aye, I've heard.

THIRD CHILD : It'll be handy havin' a wife if you're blind. Some one to clean t'windows for you.

SECOND CHILD : She won't keep his windows as clean as Bill keeps his. No one that could see could have cleaner windows than Bill has ; niver even the weeniest speck of dirt in ony of t'corners.

THIRD CHILD : Happen he'll know how to play blind-man's buff.

BILL (*with suppressed anger*) : Happen he won't ! Do you think a blind man's wife 'ull let him waste his valuable time playin' wiv a lot of bairns when he might be makin' baskets an' sich-like.

HETTIE *returns and enters the cottage with* BILL. *The other children drift away, a little awed at* BILL'S *sudden show of temper.*

HETTIE : I'll sit here.

She brings a chair forward so that she can see BILL *clean the inside of the window.*

Shall I say my seven times table to you ? Eh ! I wish I had proper brains, but Mother says I'll niver be no use for owt save takin' t'pail to t'well, an' she says I'm that gaumless I'd niver even notice if there wur a hole in t'bottom of t'pail.

Shall I begin, Bill ?

Seven ones are seven.

BILL (*cleaning the window*) : Are you goin' to say your tables to t'other blind man ?

HETTIE : Whya, I hadn't thought about sayin' my tables to him. Do you think he'd be willing to help me t'same as you do, Bill.

BILL (*angrily*) : Nay, he won't ! Do you think a blind man wiv a wife will have time to listen to your seven ones is seven ! He won't, take it fra' me, he won't, an' if you go sayin' your tables to him, it's no use sayin' 'em to me, for I won't listen to 'em. Do you onderstand ; I won't listen to 'em, an' I'll niver help you wiv your sums again.

HETTIE (*her little thin face full of trouble*) : Oh ! Bill, you're not suited ! Whativer have I done ?

BILL : It isn't what you've done ; it's what you might do. If you have any truck wiv yon Reuben Williams, I'm thro' wiv helpin' you for ever !

HETTIE *puts her hands before her face and begins to cry softly.*

BILL (*listens for a moment, then finds his way across to her*) : What's to do, Honey Bairn ?

Oh ! Lord, forgive my harsh words.

Nay, nay, Doy, there's no call to be greetin'. You may say your tables to all t'blind men in England, an' I'll help you same as I've allus helped you. Doy, Doy, give ower greetin', give ower greetin'.

He takes her on his knee and wipes her eyes with the duster.

Noo, then, begin again.

Seven ones is—— ? You must give t'answer, lile Honey Luve.

Seven ones is—— ?

HETTIE (*struggling with her sobs*) : Sev-en.

BILL : Seven twos is—— ?

HETTIE : Fourteen.

BILL : Seven threes is—— ?

HETTIE : Twenty-one.

BILL : Seven fours is—— ?

HETTIE : Twenty-eight.

BILL : Seven fives is—— ?

HETTIE : Thirty-five.

BILL : Seven sixes is—— ? Seven sixes is—— ?

HETTIE (*hesitatingly*) : Forty-three.

BILL : Try again.

HETTIE : Forty-one.

BILL : Nay, no guessing !

HETTIE (*throwing her arms around his neck*) : I can't bear for you to be cross wi' me. Mother can call me all day long an' I scarcely hear her now, but you, Bill, it's different. I can't bear a hard word from you. Seven sixes are forty-two.

BILL : Seven sevens is—— ?

There is a sharp rap on the door, and a harsh voice calls :

Is our Hettie Margaret here ?

HETTIE *slips off* BILL'S *knee and runs to the door and opens it.*

HETTIE (*seeing her mother in the doorway*) : Aye, Mother.

HER MOTHER (*giving her a clout on the side of the head*) : Fancy having to waste my time a-seekin' you, Hettie Margaret, bakin' day, when I'm despert thrang an' all. Coom home this minute. (*Turning to* BILL.) You ought to be 'shamed of yoursen helpin' an' encouragin' a child to dodge her own mother—a child 'at's not worth her salt. For all your blindness, you see as much as most sighted folk, an' you ought to be able to see 'at Hettie Margaret is a lazy, thriftless bairn as useless as a damp match. She'll niver be a credit to no one onless she mends her ways an' settles better to her book-larnin'. Get on home, Hettie Margaret, an' doänt let me catch you here in t'workin' hours. If you want to moon around here, coom when other bairns has their laikin' time.

HETTIE *slips out.*

I suppose you've heard as how Yew House has been taken by a blind man an' his wife ; Williams is their name. It'll

be strange-like havin' two blind men in sich a lile village as Hiltune.

BILL: Aye, it will. (*He sighs.*) Blindness of t'eyes is an affliction sent fra' t' Lord, but blindness of t'heart is an affliction fra' t'Devil.

HETTIE'S MOTHER: It is, Bill.

BILL: Aye, an' there's some in this village has t'Devil's affliction an' some has t'Lord's, but I'se namin' no names.

HETTIE'S MOTHER: Well, you and Reuben Williams will be company for each other, no doubt.

She looks up at the candlesticks.

Fine candlesticks you've got, an' you do keep 'em bright, but it passes me why you bother wiv 'em you not bein' able to see 'em.

BILL: Them cannelsticks wur a weddin' present to my father an' mother, that's why I keep them bright, an' there they stay while your Hettie Margaret is a grown woman an' chooses a likely lad who 'ull make her happy, then them cannelsticks 'ull leave my mantel an' rest on hers.

HETTIE'S MOTHER (*laughing*): He'll be a girt fool that asks our Hettie Margaret to wed him.

BILL: He'll be a girter fool if he doän't; an' noo I must get on wiv my window-cleanin'. Good day.

HETTIE'S MOTHER: Hoity-toity! Some folk do fancy thersens! Let's hope Reuben Williams won't give hissen sich airs an' won't be for turnin' his neighbours out of doors.

She goes out and bangs the door. BILL *continues cleaning his windows and sings automatically :*

" Three blind mice, see how they run,
They all run after the farmer's wife,
Did iver ye see sich a do in your life
As three blind mice."

He hears a timid knock on the door, and HETTIE *creeps in.*

HETTIE : It's me, Bill dear. I was hiding round t'corner. I've just put t'pail down for a minute so as to tell you 'at I'll niver care about ony other Blind Man save you, an' I won't even speak to t'other, even if I was dragged about wi' wild horses. What's more, I'll tell t'other bairns an' they'll all mind what I say, for if they doän't I'll tell them no more tales an' stories, an' there isn't ony of them can tell sich tales as I can : I tell long, long stories to 'em up in my gaffer's hay loft when t'backend cooms ; it's t'same story an' it goes on an' on, every eve, an' they are allus fair crazy to hear what's goin' to happen next. (*Resolutely.*) Those children 'at speak to t'other Blind Man shall not coom in our hay loft ony more. I luve you, Bill, an' I won't let t'other bairns luve ony other blind man save you, so there !

She dashes out breathlessly, leaving BILL *rather dazed. He smiles to himself, then continues cleaning his window. He finishes the window, then he goes to the oven, opens its door, and takes out a pie. He*

puts his finger over the crust, smells it, then puts it back again. He stands quite still for a moment and listens to the sound of a horse and cart passing up the street.

One, two, three, and four. Dobbin allus goes like that, a bit lame on his off fore, but he's been a grand horse in his time. (*He hears a step approaching his door*).

That 'ull be Mrs. Pickles.

MRS. PICKLES *enters, a packet in her hand.*

MRS. PICKLES : Eh ! dearie me, I've a brain like a broken sieve. When I brought t'currant loaf, I meant to bring you a parkin as well, an' wilta believe, I forgot all about it while I got back an' found t'parkin all set out on t'table an' my man actually cuttin' bits off t'corners. Eh! didn't I call him. " You girt gaumless dunderhead," said I, " t'parkin's for thi tea, not for thi dinner " (*she unwraps the parkin*), but I got another parkin to bring to you an' what do you think he said as I was leavin' ; he said, " Eh ! Lizzie, you're as gentle as a bramble-bush ; I wish you'd talk as soft to me as you do to owd Blind Bill. It must be very pleasant to be spoken to as you speak to him," but (*with a sigh*) husbands is husbands an' has to be kept in their places. Eh ! Bill, I thowt you'd smile when you heard how nearly you'd lost your parkin.

BILL : It's very good——

MRS. PICKLES : I must be goin' now or that man of mine 'ull have eaten all my bakin' instid of his dinner of beans an' bacon. He's as waffy as a mill-sail an' needs a deal of mindin'.

She goes out, leaving the parkin on a small table. BILL *feels his way towards it, takes it up and smells it, then walks across the room and puts it into the cupboard. He gets a knife and fork out of the drawer and lays them on the table. He hears a short knock, and* ANDREW *lets himself quietly in. He enters stealthily with something under his arm wrapped in paper.*

ANDREW: I've got two bottles of beer without my missus knowin'. Eh! she's as careful as an hour-glass. She was servin' some updale farmers, an', seein' her thrang, I slipped out with these two afore she could say "Jack Robinson." Where are t'glasses, Bill?

BILL (*rubbing his hands with glee*): I'll get 'em. I've one sound an' one wiv a lile crack in it, but they can both hold good liquor. Sit down, Andrew. (BILL *fetches the glasses from the cupboard.*) I'se greatly obliged to you.

They sit down.

ANDREW (*meditatively*): Ah! Bill, you're very well as you are. That blind man who is comin' to Yew House, he has a wife. I doubt he'll be as well off as you are. Nobody to nay-say you. You're your own master all hours of t'day——

BILL: Aye! I'm my own master, I am that. (*He drinks.*)

ANDREW: Eh! (*Drinking.*) You can say what you like, but it seems a girt pity 'at all t'hard-workin' wives is so

hard-mouthed an' all t'gentle-spoken ones are so gaumless. Well, here's to you, Bill.

They raise their glasses.

BILL: Good health, Andrew.

They hear a step, and both try to hide their glasses.

ANDREW (*in a scared voice*): Hope it isn't my missus. She'll have this up against me for mony a long day.

They hear a timid knock.

BILL: It's lile Hettie Margaret. Come in, Bairn.

ANDREW *rises and opens the door for the child, then closes it quickly.*

ANDREW: Coom reet in, Hettie. Here's thi two owd sweethearts, Andrew Bolton an' Blind Bill. (*He raises his glass to her.*) May you grow up as bonnie as t'princess in t'pantomine, Honey, wiv all the young men in Wensleydale wantin' to walk out wiv you.

BILL: Nay! (*Raising his glass to the child.*) May you have a good man to fend for you, Doy!

HETTIE (*a little out of breath*): Bill, oh! Bill, I'se just stepped ower to tell you 'at t'blind man——

BILL (*groaning*): I'm stalled on hearin' of him!

HETTIE: Reuben Williams who has taken Yew House——

ANDREW: He's heard all about him.

HETTIE: Well, he isn't exactly a real blind man.

ANDREW: Not real!

HETTIE: Nay, he's ony blind in *one* eye, an' that isn't real blindness at all, Bill, dear.

BILL (*raising his voice*) : Lord, Thoo hast granted my prayer, but in Thine own way.

HETTIE *creeps out of the door.*

ANDREW (*looking at the two empty bottles*) : Eh ! I wonder how iver I'll git these two empties back without my owd woman knowing.

BILL (*cheerfully*) : She won't miss two empties, Andrew.

ANDREW : She's terrible careful ; she's more, she's reet close. Do you know, Bill, if my missus had killed two birds wiv one stone, she'd want t'stone back again.

BILL : Niver mind her, Andrew. Forgit her whiles you're wiv me.

ANDREW (*drinking*) : Well, here's to t'ony real blind man in Hiltune ! Good health !

The curtain falls.

BLIND BILL'S RANGE

KENSINGTON
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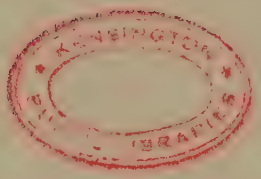
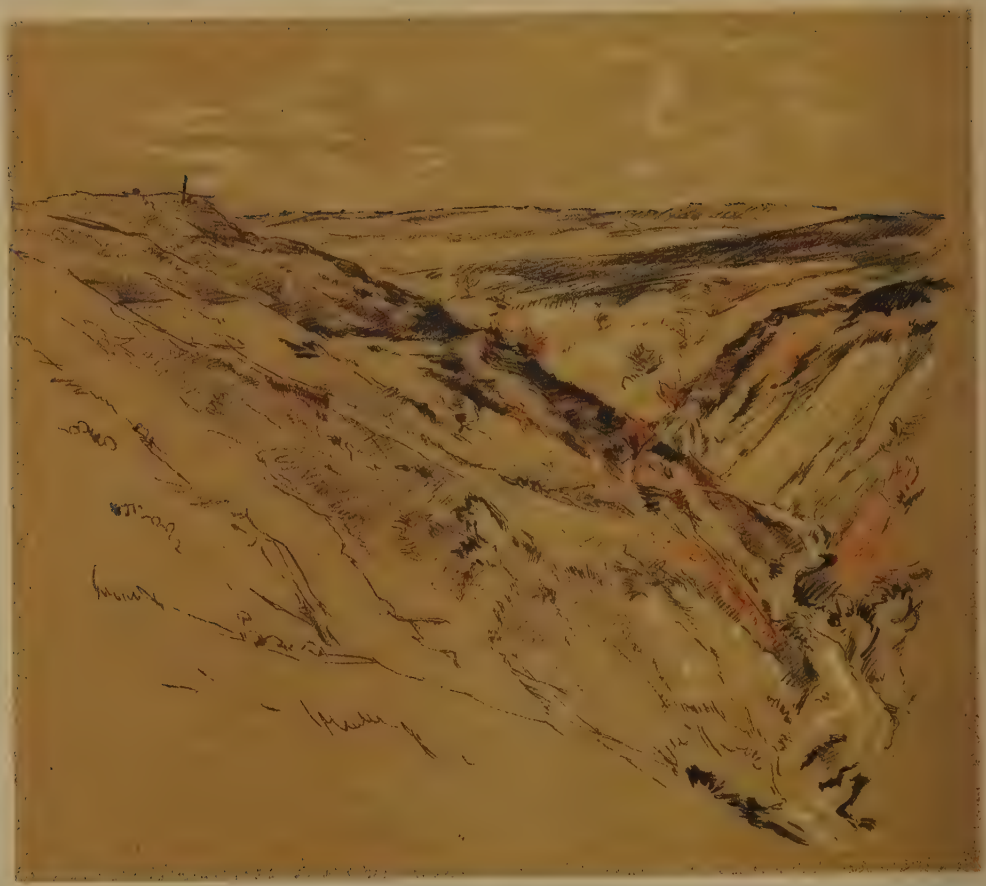
A PROTEST





A YORKSHIRE BECK

A PROTEST

IT isn't fair to take my becks,
My lile hidden tarn,
My mossy springs, my waterfall,
An' make all on 'em larn
Thi songs. Oh what for mony miles
Apart if t'girt winds call,
" *Lassie* " wi' just thi tone of voice ?
An' where is t'use an' all
Of thi being South an' my being North
If ivery waking minute
" *Lassie* " is sung in t'leafing woods
By throstle, lark an' linnet.

It isn't fair to seek their aid
When silence takes thi part,
When peaceful moors an' far-off hills
An' stars help thee to court ;
How can I know a second's peace
An' how can I be quit
Of thowts of thee when becks an' birds
An' winds will not forgit

Thi way of singing "*Lassie,*"
Two notes sae lang an' deep
'At ivery neet their echoes sound
Reet doon t'Dales of Sleep.

ONDUE INFLUENCE

MARTHA NOPKINS' PARLOUR

ONDUE INFLUENCE

ONE lazy afternoon I placed my chair so that I could see the sun on the old beech that curtsies north, south, east and west as low as the ground. West of it, through a gap between the rowans beginning to be red-leaved, the limes showed goldenly green, and the bracken was turning russet on the " intake." A robin perched near by and sung very persistently and very sweetly. I picked up Helen Waddell's " Wandering Scholars " and re-read some lovely things at random, for, though a book of immense scholarship it is a book in which one can wander about as pleasantly as her *jongleurs*, priests and saints wander through medieval Europe.

" So long as the mighty axis of the starry sphere revolves, and dark night is driven off by the shining stars, so long as Phosphor rises splendid from towering waves, and the swift wind lashes the deep, so long as the rivers foam down to the sea, and the clouds touch the threatening peaks, and the valleys lie low with their bogs, and the high hills rear their jagged crests, so long . . ."

The small garden gate clicked and my dog, suddenly awakened from sleep, dashed barking across the lawn ; he

ceased barking as soon as he recognised an old acquaintance, Mrs. Buffey.

She is a heavy woman, and though it was a warm, sunny day, wore her best winter cape much laden with fringes of black beads. She also wore a bonnet trimmed with beads and some rather faded purple roses. When I first saw this bonnet I thought it too good to be true, for no one else in the length and breadth of Yorla Dale now wears a bonnet, save Mrs. Buffey. It is said in Loverley that her loyalty is not so praiseworthy as I imagine, that once she was seen in Harrogate trying on the ordinary pull-on hats that most of us wear, that when Mrs. Buffey cocked one of these on to the summit of her iron-grey top-knot, the little milliner had burst out laughing, that Mrs. Buffey had gazed at her for a moment, picked up the purple-rosed bonnet, tied it with great dignity, and said :

" Manners is manners, young woman, and thine have lost thee a good customer, for Jane Buffey can afford to pay for what she chooses ! "

As she came towards me, I closed " The Wandering Scholars." There was no need to rise to greet her, for we were old friends and did not need to stand on ceremony.

" I'll fetch a chair," she said, and went inside and dragged out a stiff, upright chair and placed it near me.

" You know as how I can't abide one of them low easy chairs, there's no gettin' out of 'em. Eh ! it's a warm day. Were you thinkin' of workin' ? Dearie me, luve, I wish

you'd give your brain a rest, but I'll make for off if I'm disturbin' you."

"That's all right, Mrs. Buffey."

For a while we spoke of the price of eggs, of meal, of her pigs, and of my pernicious habit of feeding the song-birds in winter, but I knew that Mrs. Buffey was bursting with something of far deeper import, and, after half an hour's beating about the bush, she said:

"D'you mind my husband's cousin, her that was named Mrs. Martha Nopkins? She was very deaf, you'll recollect, an' was allus mistakin' what folk was tellin' her."

"Yes, she was close on ninety when I saw her."

"Well, she's passed away. Happen you've heard?"

"No, I've been away from the dale for several days and only returned this morning. I hope she had a good end."

"Aye, she had an' all, happen better than she deserves," she said darkly. "She allus said as how she'd leave three hundred pounds to me, three hundred to her other cousin, Esther Nopkins, and three hundred to a great nevvy 'at was very civil to her."

"Well, three hundred pounds is a very useful sum, Mrs. Buffey."

"Aye, it is an' all, but we doän't get three hundred apiece—we get nobbut a hundred each."

"Well, a hundred pounds is a nice sum to think about."

"It is an' all; but a promise is a promise, and when Martha Nopkins said three hundred, she meant three hundred and not one hundred."

I agreed that from what I had seen of Mrs. Nopkins she was a woman of her word.

"Aye, she was, but she was weak-minded towards t'end. It was ondue influence and a matter for t'law, but if you bring in law where there's any brass, it's t'lawyers 'at get it, and relations one way and t'other has no benefits. You'll mind my cousin had a servant called Nellie Naylor; well, it's her that's been a-usin' of her ondue influence. She's a woman I can't abide, wi' carroty hair, but, to do her justice, she was allus kind to my cousin—Martha was allus well cared-for; I'm not sayin' owt agen Nellie being good to t'owd woman, but she must have used her ondue influence to have got my cousin to alter three hundred to one hundred."

"Perhaps," I ventured, "your cousin had not so much to leave; perhaps a hundred apiece to three of you was all she'd got."

Mrs. Buffey fanned herself with her glove, and continued:

"T'will stood like this, 'at three on us were to have three hundred apiece, and that her house and furnitoor, knick-knacks, chiney and silver were for Nellie Naylor, and nobody grudged her that, for she'd been good to t'owd woman, but sitha noo! what happened! Nellie Naylor knew 'at t'house was for her some day, t'furnitoor an' all, an' when Martha was first taken ill—you'll mind she was bedridden for four months afore t'end—what did that carroty-haired woman do? I'll tell you, luve, she went into Ripon an' ordered new carpets, aye, *new* carpets for ivery room in t'house, NEW carpets for a bedridden woman of ninety-two! Also she

ordered two large blue chiney vases for t'console under t'girt gowd mirror, a new rocking-chair for t'kitchen, a new cage for t'canary, an' t'best wireless set she could find."

"And what did your cousin say when the new carpets arrived?"

"Say; she said nowt! She just smiled, she bein' varra weak-minded; an' next day when t'Vicar came to see her, she said, 'Hoo dosta like t'new carpets?' and then she chuckled and said, 'Nellie is a good lass, an' I'm reet fain she can take care on herself.'

"Next day she died, an' them foolish words were t'last words she iver spoke. Aye, it was a case of ondue influence."

"Well," I said, "I'm sorry you're disappointed, Mrs. Buffey, but Nellie Naylor's nicely set up, isn't she?"

"Aye, she's goin' to take in boarders for Easter and t'summer holidays, an' new carpets an' t'wireless an' t'gold bird cage 'ull come in varra handy, but she's one that can't carry corn, for yester I seed her and she said, 'Good morning, Jane Buffey.' *Jane* to me; afore it allus used to be Mrs. Buffey!"

"It's a mercy, it seems to me, that you and the other cousins got a hundred pounds each!"

"Aye, if Martha Nopkins had lived another four months that Naylor woman would have ordered new beds and bedding, sheets, blankets and eiderdowns, and then there'd only have been ten pounds apiece for her sorrowing relations!"

It was nearing tea-time, so I invited Mrs. Buffey to stop.

" Nay," she said, " t'other beneficiaries is coomin' to me for tea, and they think just as I do, 'at it wurn't ony bad feelin' on t'part of owd Martha Nopkins, it was just a case of Ondue Influence."

THE POINT OF VIEW

THE POINT OF VIEW

THERE'S a hedge between Farmer Cass and me,
Nine feet of thorn and holly : there are gaps
With elder stumps and a young rowan tree,
And wooden stakes above some coney traps :

To-day I met him, " *Now thoo's gotten t'meadow*
It is thi job to keep them hedges trim ! "
A wild bird fluttered in the holly shadow,
He looked at me intently, I at him.

" See how t'lile thorn are all choked up wi' briar,
They never should be 'lowed to grow so strong."
I looked and dreamed of every prickled spire
Transmuted into roses in full song.

Oh ! flood of elder flowers ! sweet breath of kine !
" Elders are good for nowt, not even wine ! "

MAT GAYLE

MAT GAYLE

"WHYA, Mat, you said you'd coom to t'Social this evenin'; it begins at eight sharp, an' you'll niver be ready in time."

"Gie ower fondlin' yon pup, an' git into thi Sunday claethes, Mat."

Mat Gayle sat in his shirt-sleeves before the kitchen fire; a month-old sheep-dog pup, wrapped up in an old shawl, was dozing limply on his knee.

"Is it distemper it's got? Well, if it's kept warm an' all it 'ull take no harm for a few hours. Coom on, Mat, we'll wait while you change. It'll be pleasanter like all goin' together."

Half a dozen neighbours, men and women, sat down in the roomy kitchen, gaily decorated with festoons of coloured paper and holly sprigs above the framed almanacks after Landseer.

Mrs. Gayle came downstairs, a comely woman, much younger-looking than her husband, and, after being greeted genially by the women and jovially by the men, she said:

"You're all wasting your breath; if Mat says he's not going, he's not going."

" He hasn't said he's not going," said one of the younger men.

" Well, he's acted it," said his wife. " If Mat meant to go, he'd not be sitting afore t'fire in his shirt-sleeves a'cuddlin' t'pup ! "

Gayle did not speak. He sat quite still and let the neighbours and his wife do the talking. He was a thin man about fifty years old, almost bald, with weak, light-blue eyes, a long nose and a kind, ungainly mouth. His thin, knotted hands and claw-like nails rested on his knees each side of the beshawled puppy.

" Keep t'fire goin', Mat, an' we'll have a cup o' tea on our return " ; then, turning to the others, Mrs. Gayle continued, " It's no use talkin' ; if Mat means to stay, he'll stay."

" But the Christmas Eve Social is allus t'best of t'lot," said a farmer's pretty wife. " It's a pity to miss it acause of a badly pup."

Gayle looked up at her, and spoke at last.

" It isn't only t'pup ; there's t'piebald pony has rheumatics in her off front knee, an' t'gilt we call ' Faith ' has slipped her piglets an' is varra badly. Close t'door quietly as you go out so as not to wake t'pup."

With a merry clatter and much kissing beneath the mistletoe spray which had been hung as provocatively as possible, Mrs. Gayle and the neighbours went out.

For half an hour Mat sat immovable, then he laid the sleeping pup in his arm-chair and put a couple of peats on

the fire. He took off his slippers and got into some waterproofed boots, fetched an old coat and a battered hat from a peg, and dimmed the lamp. Then he went out into the night.

He first made his way across the snowy yard to the stables, avoiding carefully the heaps of piled-up snow. From a cupboard under some stone stairs he took a lanthorn, lit it, then opened the stable door. A horse and a pony occupied the two stalls. He went into that of the cart horse.

" Noo then, lad, how ista farin' on sich a neet ? By gow ! thoo's in clover, enough straw for two hosses. Art warm ? Let's feel thi ears."

As he caught the ears, the horse lowered its head until its nose was between his knees. For ten minutes Gayle with both hands softly and firmly pulled its cold ears, whistling and grunting all the while the first verse (for like many people he knew no more) of " Good King Wenceslas."

When he had finished, the horse ran its nose first down one side of him, then down the other.

" Nay, lad, thoo's niver thinkin' 'at I'd forget thee on Christmas Eve ? I've an apple for thee, tho' t'missus says apples is terrible dear at this time o' year, but I've put an orange under t'other apples, an' happen she'll niver miss it or likely think 'at her nevvy's bairns have taken it, if she does count 'em."

Then he closed the door and went into the pony's stall. It was an ugly, shaggy galloway, skewbald rather than piebald, and uncanny-looking, with one wall-eye ; it had a big head and mule-like ears, but it whinnied gently and came

to meet him as he entered. He took down some embrocation from a high shelf and for a quarter of an hour rubbed the pony's knee, then, with a couple of pats he straightened himself and grunted :

" It's Christmas Eve, lass, an' thoo's not forgotten either. Here's thi bit o' sugar."

Closing the door, he went out into the night.

" Theer's t'gilt next," and he went back to the kitchen, warmed some milk, and put it into an old cider bottle. The pup still slept, so he crept softly out, lanthorn in one hand, bottle in the other, and made his way to the manure yard, where the well-built pigsties were. On entering the yard, he heard the pig's laboured breathing.

" I doubt I'll save her," he muttered aloud. He opened the sty door and went quietly in. The gilt lay on a bed of straw with two pieces of sacking over her.

" Hoo ista, owd lass ? " He put a hand on her cheek and she grunted back to him ; then he ran his hand down her to see if she were warm enough. She was too sick to stir.

" Eh ! it's a serious business slipping thi young. There's varra little I can do to help thee, save keep thee warm and comfortable like." Then, again whistling " Good King Wenceslas," he patiently fed the gilt from the cider bottle. She grunted her gratitude.

" Noo, thoo'll do while t'mornin'," and he picked up the light, closed the door and made his way to the byre.

" Whist ! Snowball ! " He addressed a dainty-looking

cow that was lying down in her stall. "There's a robin somewhere in here. We doän't want none of our visitors to go a-hungered," and he pulled some holly berries out of his pocket.

"Christmas present from us baith," he said, as a bright-eyed robin hopped from its perch on the manger and picked greedily at the red berries. He went out and brought an extra armful of hay for the cow, then left the byre.

"Hens!" he muttered, "they'll not be expecting ony attentions. No good wakin' of 'em up. I'll give 'em extra corn to-morrow; that'll serve 'em."

"Noo, I'll let Rake in for an hour or so," and he unloosened the sheep-dog from its chain. With a bound it leapt up and licked his face. Then he and Rake made their way back to the kitchen. The pup had woken up and its eyes were bright and its ears pointed in his direction.

Bidding both Rake and the pup lie down, he made his way into the pantry.

"These here," he said, picking up some gaunt mutton bones, "is for broth, I'll be bound, but one on 'em's a present for thee, Rake—t'biggest of 'em—an' if thoo's a canny cur thoo'lt hide it in thi kennel, so as not to get thi master a callin'. Dosta onderstand?"

The dog seized the bone, whilst every movement made by him was intently watched by the puppy from the arm-chair.

"Noo then, what shall I gie thee, lile 'un? Eh! thoo's t'comicalest seet in this shawl; it's a coat thoo's needin'.

Aye, a coat, an' whya not a flannel coat, summat to keep thi back warm ? "

Climbing heavily the creaking stairs, he made his way to the bedroom above. There was a sound of drawers opening and shutting, then the first verse of " King Wenceslas," and finally he came down the stairs, in his arms an embroidered flannel petticoat.

" A new one, pup, one 'at's niver been worn. What dosta think to a bonny new coat for a Christmas present ? "

After turning up the lamp, he went over to the work basket on the dresser, and, turning all the contents out into an untidy heap on the table, he found a pair of scissors.

Scratching his bald head, he turned the petticoat first one way, then the other.

" I'se capped," he said, but finally, after making three patterns from an extinct " Yorkshire Evening Post," he cut out a fair little coat. Then he rummaged for a large needle and thread and tape.

Sitting on the edge of the table, he spent an hour sewing four tape fastenings on to the little coat. He gave a heavy sigh of relief as it was finished, walked across and, taking the soiled shawl off, put the new coat on the pup.

" Oh ! isn't thoo a bonny seet noo ! What dosta think to thi Christmas present, lile 'un ? "

The puppy gave a queer little croon and settled itself on Gayle's stomach, while the sheep dog, gorged with its unexpected and extra feed, lay outstretched at his feet.

Gayle closed his eyes and did not hear the church clock

pealing midnight. Shortly after Rake awoke and barked as he heard steps outside in the stone courtyard. Mrs. Gayle and the neighbours trooped in merrily.

" Well, let's have a cup of tea. Whativer have you been doin', Mat Gayle ? " Mrs. Gayle said, as she saw the remnants of a flannel petticoat and the contents of her work basket in an untidy heap on the kitchen table.

" Bless my life ! " said a rosy-cheeked wife, " if he hasn't made a coat for t'pup. Did you iver ! "

Gayle got up and scratched his head sheepishly, the pup under one arm.

" Aye, I've made a coat for t'pup as a Christmas present, an' I couldn't find ony other flannel, Emma, save them new petticoats of thine."

" What's t'use of sayin' owt," sighed Emma Gayle, " if Mat has a mind to do a thing, he'll just do it, but it's a lucky thing 'at we're not wearin' mony petticoats these days " ; then she added good-naturedly, " It's a reet bonny coat, Mat," as she took the pup from him.

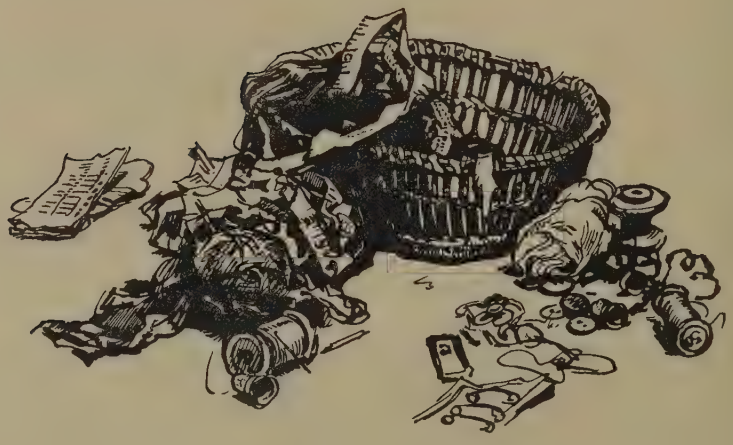
" Well, I niver ! " said the youngest woman. " You do take it calmly. I'd have summat more to say if Joe took my petticoats and cut 'em up for a sheep-cur pup."

" Make us some tea, Mat," Mrs. Gayle said to her husband, and then, turning to the neighbours she said as she took off her hat and coat :

" Ever sin' Mat came back fra t'Dardanelles he can't bear to see ony creature sufferin' or dyin'. Whya, he'll give ony lad in this village sixpence to screw a cockerel's neck for him.

It's no good callin' of him, he'll go his own way just t'same."

Then they all sat down to tea while Mat resumed his seat before the fire, with the pup on his knee looking very spruce in its new coat.



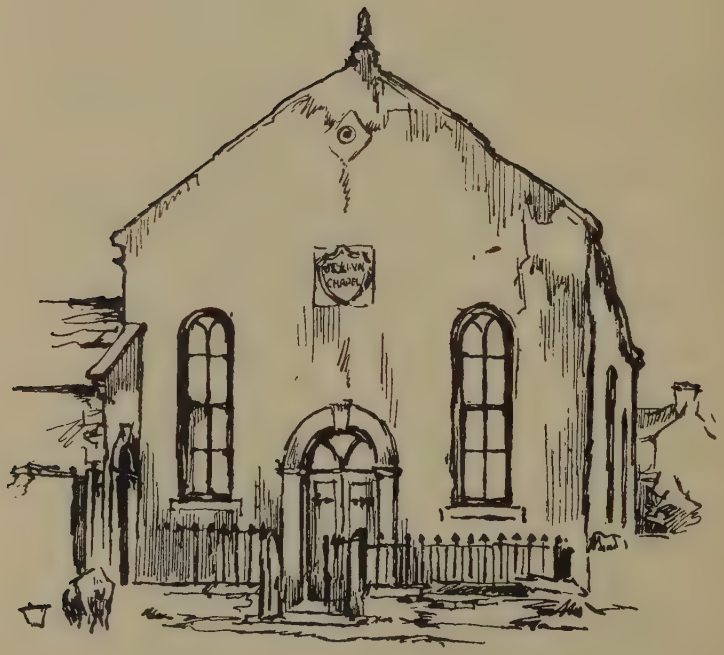
ON THE BOULEVARD MONTMARTRE

ON THE BOULEVARD MONTMARTRE

"WHAT will you have?"
"I don't much care;
Something that fizzes."
"Let's get some air
Here by the door. A bottle of Mumm?
Waiter!"
"That's good! I'll feel less glum
After a glass. Do you want to dance?
Most Englishmen do when they come to France."
"Oh! I'm not keen."

" Then I'd like best
Just to sit here away from the rest.
It's a fool of a life, week in, week out,
You doän't make much, an' you doän't save owt."
" You come from the North ? "
" How do you know ?
Seems you're quick tho' you look so slow.
What if I do ? Whose business is it ? "
" Well, you and your job don't seem to fit.
I came from Halifax yesterday,
Paris, I thought, for a bit of play,
But I never thought that I should meet
A Yorkshire girl."
" By gow ! it's a treat
To hear you speak. Let's have a drink
To help us both so we needn't think ;
Thinking's no good at a job like mine,
It's drink and pay. Aye ! I'm feelin' fine :
Sup, lad, sup, and give over thinking,
Dost hear yon sound o' glasses clinking,
Corks a-popping an' violins screaming,
An' all those luvely diamonds gleaming ! "
" It's horribly hot, let's have a walk
Under the plane-trees where we can talk."
" What ! ista ailing ? Art feeling queer ?
Is this thi first time ? Sitha here,
Give me fifty an' then make tracks
To thi muther, lad, in Halifax.

Me! doän't worry. . . . I'm used to it now.
By gow! yon sheeny is making a row
With the Manager. Nay, it is no use
Somehow I'll never get used to Jews. . . .
What can you do? Eh! noo thoo's crying,
There isn't no need for crying or sighing.
There's days of course when one's feeling bad,
But all folks have their off-days, lad;
Things are never as bad as they seem,
An' never as good as we like to dream. . . .
My folks are Chapel, from Grassington way;
It's time my owd dad was piking his hay!
It's been a grand day for drying, an' yet
St. Swithin's Day here was terrible wet.
Have another glass? Nay, I'm all right,
But thoo! by gow! thoo's an awful sight,
Wiv a face like a bairn that's just been whipped."
" You've no idea how I'm feeling hipped
At finding a Yorkshire girl at this."
" *Thanks for the fifty, an' here's one kiss*
To give to Wharfedale for me. Doän't cry,
Shake hands and now clear off . . . and . . .
Good-bye! "



DICKON THISTLETHWAITE

DICKON THISTLETHWAITE

IF you are mountain-bred, no matter how beautiful the low country may be, your eyes will always be questing the far horizons for the foothills that promise greater heights. Dickon Thistlethwaite's father was a mountainy man, and his mother's people came from Upper Swaledale, where one or two of the fells are high enough to win the appellation "mountain," so that Dickon inherited from both sides a love for the tops and could not be expected to settle contentedly in flat country.

When he was a little lad his mother would take him with her to Grinton in Swaledale to visit her own people, and before he was five years old he had plodded to the bare summit of Calver Hill, having begged a lift in a farmer's gig between Grinton and Muker. By the time he was ten he had explored Stag's Fell, Kisdon Hill and Rogan's Seat, whence he could see away to the north-west the harebell-blue mountains of his father's country. As he became bigger he learned to love the sterner hills of Cumberland more than the green summits or heathery tops of Yorkshire; and before he had reached manhood he had given all his heart to that most difficult, but most glamorous, of all English mountains—Great Gable;

therefore, when he was close on thirty and was ordered to a sanatorium in agreeable, slightly rolling country, I knew it was unlikely he would ever settle down.

"If they'd only leave me among my own hills, I'd get right very soon," he had said; but the doctor overruled him, and, as there was every hope of curing tuberculosis in the early stages, Dickon very reluctantly consented to go, taking with him three hampers of books all dealing with mountains in different parts of the world.

. . . . . .

He gave me a smile of greeting as I came up the steps on to the veranda where he was lying full-length in a long chair, well-wrapped up.

"I've brought you Geoffrey Winthrop's book, 'On the High Hills,'" I said. "It's mostly about climbing in Switzerland, and it is very well done."

He took it eagerly, then asked me to sit down. As I did so, he noticed me look at the country—a panorama south-east, south and west of well-farmed fields.

"Isn't it a tamed country," he sighed. "One can lie here day after day and never see a pair of buzzards planing down to a hidden nest. Do you know, I've never heard a lapwing or a curlew the whole time I've been here!"

I looked at him closely. His cheeks were more sunken below the cheek-bones, and there were new lines near his mouth, but the starriness of the hazel, curly-lashed eyes was the same. His skin was a little more like ivory, but though his face was gaunt, he spoke with all the old enthusiasm.

A pleasant nurse brought us some tea, and as I took up the teapot, a thrush called sweetly from a bare laburnum tree.

He listened. "Oh! I'd exchange every note of that sweet song to hear a stonechat calling; I do miss the mountain birds so much! If I'm not going to get better, I shan't mind greatly, if only I can have a few more glorious days on Great Gable."

"Don't be foolish, Dickon," I said; "you couldn't climb Great Gable until you're much stronger."

"I could if I put all my will to it. Do you know what I do when I lie awake night after night watching the stars circling from east to west, never a star hidden by some splendid outjutting rock?"

"Tell me."

"I climb again step by step. I can feel—aye, actually feel—the rope again under my armpits—some wonderful gully or arête on Great Gable. On my bad nights I go to the Eagle's Nest arête; there you've got to think of nothing in the world save where your next hand-hold is."

He closed his eyes for a moment, then said:

"There's one place where you've got to change feet. Did you ever try to change feet?"

I shook my head.

"No, you've only done the easier scrambles, so you won't know what it's like, but it's the deuce of a business changing feet if you've next to nothing in the way of a hand-hold."

He drank his tea and asked for another cup.

"Some day," he said with a smile, "I'll girdle the famous

Napes Needle for you, and you can watch me quite safely from the 'Dress Circle.' There is a rather thrilling bit near the top! From Wasdale Head I shall take you up the long, green slope of Gavel Neese. Oh! the winter sunlight on Gavel Neese is kinder than this pale, struggling light. Yes, we'll go by Gavel Neese to Little Hell Gate, and I'll show you, too, Great Hell Gate, the Arrowhead Ridge and the Sphinx Rock. From there you get such a beautiful view, looking westward down Wastdale—Wastwater looks like a grey pearl—and beyond Wastwater a blur of lower hills, then the Irish Sea. You'd love that view!

"Do you know, I climbed Great Gable by the Eagle's Nest Gully—my first rock climb—when I was twelve! I remember it so well; and afterwards, like a young vandal, I scratched my name on a little pane of glass on a window in the tiny Wastdale Church; the date as well, so that I should not be altogether forgotten. I want to be laid there at the end because it's the finest mountain valley in England. Oh! think of it, to lie at rest surrounded by Great Gable, Scawfell Pike, Scawfell, Great End, the Pillar, Buckbarrow, Yewbarrow, Kirkfell, Lingmell and the Screes, and not so very far away Glaramara."

He paused, then looked up and smiled.

"Can't you hear the little waterfalls in the *a's* running over those rocky *r's*—Glaramara—Glaramara?"

He was prevented from continuing by a spell of gasping, and for a while lay with his eyes closed.

After some minutes he said quietly:

"Look here, you must help me to get away from here. Even if I can never stand on Great Gable's summit and watch the buzzards homing—they and the world at my feet—at least help me to get where I may once more see the seven great stars of the Plough shining over its snow-capped top.

"Oh! may my soul haunt you on the hills for ever if you do not fight for me, fight 'em all—doctors, relations, nurses, all of 'em—fight like hell, but take me back just once where I may see my mountains. Do you want to hear my sighs in every noisy waterfall? Do you want always to hear my voice upbraiding you among the great silences? Take me away! My heart will break in this smug greenness, and if I am to die, let it be among the folk and the things that I love. Oh! for months past the thought of Great Gable, of seeing it once again has kept me alive. *You* can fight! Put up a fight for me. Oh! if you do not, there will be no more mountain-gladness for you; you will be able to share only my sorrow at dying in exile."

. . . . . .

In spite of specialists, relations and nurses, he went back to Wastdale—the dampest vale in England—and, at the first opportunity, he insisted on being wheeled out of doors.

"It is terribly foolhardy to go out on such a snowy night," I told him as his nurse and I wheeled him out into the inn courtyard.

"The Plough is now over Kirkdale," he said, "but soon it will be over Great Gable. I'll go in when it is over Great

Gable. Let me see the Pleiades, Scawfell-way ; now turn me round for a moment so that I may see Jupiter burning above Yewbarrow. God ! isn't this worth years of life in the lowlands ! Among the mountains and the stars such minutes count as eons."

Then he sighed happily, and I walked about, not far from him, to keep warm. The river was silent under a coverlet of ice, the wind was still, and no branch rustled, only the soft whine of a sheep-cur far down-lake disturbed the holy beauty of the night.

I watched for a while Orion rising over the southern heights ; Cassiopeia, a jewelled *W* high in the zenith ; the Pole Star in the north-east ; and then, turning northwards, I saw that the Plough was swinging over Great Gable.

I walked back to tell Dickon Thistlethwaite, but hesitated to speak because he was asleep. I went in and asked the motherly nurse to help me wheel him indoors. She came out and, bending over, looked strangely at Dickon.

" My dear ! " she said to me very softly, " he's asleep right enough, but—it's—his—last—sleep."

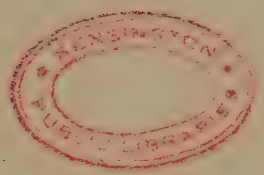
THE PIT PONY

THE PIT PONY

THEY'RE using machinery down our pit
For ponies' jobs ;
They doän't keep fit
For long, and oftentimes I find
After a bit they go almost blind.
It's better for them to be clear of this,
But some on us lads will rarely miss
Ways of them ;

They're so friendly-like
Seems like having another tyke
In the clammy darkness snuffling near,
Their nickerings most of us like to hear.
But after to-morrow motors will do
Jobs they did.
There's one named Sue,
Been here for years ;
I've offered for her. . . .
By gum ! an' didn't it make a stir
When I told my missus.
" What's the good
Of summat that's allus needing food ! "
So I went to market and bought some hay,
Enough to keep her for many a day,
For it weän't be long ere my missus, too,
Will larn to luve yon pony, Sue.
She's blind as a bat, and needs a rest
Afore she sets out on her journey West.

THE ASTROLOGER



THE ASTROLOGER

THE ASTROLOGER

AT twilight, a tall, slightly stooping man, rather muffled up, passed down the village street, while Mrs. Buffey and I were discussing the last whist drive.

" A stranger," I commented.

" Aye," she replied ; " he's rented Leven Grange and also taken t'meadow wiv t'high round hill in it. You'll mind t'hill folk call Hobbie's Hill. He's an astrologer."

" Do you mean an astronomer? "

" Nowt o' t'sort," she said. " There's a world of difference atween an astrologer and an astronomer. An astronomer knows a deal about t'stars and an astrologer makes up a deal about stars. Yon's an astrologer, and his name is Octavius Leonard Vennering, or else it's Leonard Octavius Vennering, and his housekeeper told me 'at he has such a horror of t'sun that he niver ventures out while after sundown. Did you iver hear of owt so odd ; an' then he goes to Hobbie's Hill an' sits down on an owd fallen tree an' watches t'stars while midnight and sometimes later, but he allus comes in afore sun-up ; an' she says he's got a globe all covered wiv stars instead of being properly marked out wi' land and sea like other folks has what are scholars ; and he's got a library,

an' ivery book in it is about t'Influence of t'Stars on Folk's Lives.

" Mrs. Henn—that's his housekeeper—says as how some folk is born under bad stars and some under good, and if you happen to be born under a bad star, no matter how you try, you'll commit murders, have accidents to your head, an' have rash friendships wi' t'opposite sex, which, being put into ordinary language means you'll be likely to play t'fool ; but if you're born under a good star, then you'll be fond of travelling an' have a girt luve of justice an' be terrible popular.

" I told her as how you cared a deal about stars, but that you liked t'sun even better, an' she said there's no accounting for tastes, an' that it was likely 'at you happened to be born at t'reet time as regards t'sun, but 'at it might be all wrong time for t'moon. Then she asked when I was born, and as she didn't mean it impertinent-like, I told her, an' she said, varra solemnly, I was born under Leo, which means the lion. Then she said as how it was a girt pity, as folk born under Leo were likely to suffer wi' t'backache, but I told her I thowt nowt to Leo and that other folk had worse backaches nor what I had.

" It don't do folk no good tellin' 'em they're born to backaches or to be murderers an' such-like, an' I told her I didn't think much to t'folk what gazed at stars—not meanin' you, luve ; you've got to know a bit about 'em if you write poetry verses—but 'at I thowt more to astronomers than to astrologers.

" T'other night she came round to our place for some

cream, an' when I let her out t'Hunter was just rising over our sycamore tree, sparkling varra breetly, an' there was a touch of frost in t'air.

" ' Eh ! ' says she, ' isn't Orion wunnerful.'

" ' Orion,' says I, ' yon's t'Hunter, an' it's been t'Hunter iver since I was a lile lass of seven ! Orion, indeed ! Who wants such fancy names for Yorkshire stars ! '

" ' T'Hunter is its ordinary name, but it's called Orion by scholars,' says she, and says she, ' you'd better look to your cows while it's in t'ascendant as it's varra harmful for cattle.'

" Nice cheering caller she was ! "

. . . . . .

A few days later I met Mrs. Buffey, and, after a word or two on general subjects, she said :

" About yon astrologer, he's not such a girt fool after all. Wilta believe it, that folk actually pay him to hear such stuff about t'stars. Mrs. Henn says he makes no end of brass telling horrorscoops. They send him their names an' t'hour of their birth an' a postal order for ten shillings, or, for a pound, he tells 'em a deal more, an' he makes a pattern on a sheet of paper an' tells 'em what planet favours 'em—planets not bein' t'same as t'stars. She says, yesterday, he was all day workin' out t'horrorscoop for a duchess. I never did think much of t'idle rich, but to give your brass to be told that t'Hunter's harmful for your cattle is reet foolish. She says sometimes he puts in a bit about marriage an' such-like if he thinks t'ladies is onmarried 'at writes him, so

I told her to tell him 'at I could tell his horrorscoop without star-gazin', an' that he was reet to stay indoors while t'sun was shinin' for fear Jack Ibbetson—our police officer—saw him and took him up for takin' money by false pretences. I said, ' Tell him 'at he's likely been born to be an honest man and do honest work, an' to cease makin' t'Lord's stars his abettors ower such humbuggery ! ' "

. . . . . .

A few weeks later I learned from Mrs. Buffey that Leonard Octavius Vennering and Mrs. Henn had shaken the dust of our village from their feet.

" He said as how Loverley wurn't congenial—that maist of t'folk here were born under Saturn ; them 'at wurn't melancholy would be liable to deafness ; so he's gone, but he's not paid my milk and cream bill, an' he's left no address, luve. I think nowt to astrologers " ; and Mrs. Buffey passed on.

LYRIC

LYRIC

NO matter where thoo wander,
Be't North, South, East or West,
In hot lands or in cool lands,
Thi heart will find no rest
Fra' mine : in far-off rivers
Thoo'll hear my Laver call
Sweet chimings of its hidden bells
Where alders grow sae tall.

Aboon a strange bird's liltin'
  Thoo'lt dream on a Dallow lark,
Singin' ower moor an' intake
  Fra' dawn while t'edge o' dark.
Thoo aim to lose thi sorrow
  More'n half a world away,
Yet thowts of me an' Dallow
  Thoo niver can nay-say;

When t'lile wind cooms a-whisperin'
  An' thi new country blesses,
Thoo'll feel upon thi darlin' eyes
  My unforgotten kisses;
An' thro' lang years o' silence
  'At Time is slowly takin',
Beneath the soughing of world seas
  I'll hear thi proud heart breakin'.

A LETTER

A LETTER

I AM here in Wensleydale
  Waiting for a letter,
Thoo is half t'world away
    (Folk think it is better).
I can hear t'mavis sing
  Sweetly at nightfall,
Out on leagues of water, thoo
  Can hear t'sea-gull's call:
I can see t'Hunter rise
  An' thoo, t'Southern Cross.
Whya, lad, a different gain,
  An' a different loss.

AUNT MARIA

AUNT MARIA

AUNT MARIA sat like a patriarch of old, three generations of her family grouped about her. She was by virtue of self-election the head of the Sparrow-Spinks family (*née* a Sparrow of Sparrow Court), and at least for a decade no one had chosen to dispute her authority. She was a smallish, stout woman, yet energetic in all her movements, with a high colour, pale, astonished eyebrows and a determined chin, or one might say more correctly two determined chins. She vaunted the fact that neither among her own children nor among her nephews and nieces nor their friends had she any favourites, which, being put differently, meant that, if occasion demanded, she could be equally forbidding with them all.

She sat in a well-upholstered arm-chair before a card table, one foot resting on a plush footstool. As a background

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for her dignity were festooned plush cushions, and close at hand a large domed cage which held a moulting grey and rose-coloured parrot. Her family sat around, the older members near her, the younger ones in more shadowy corners of the large room. It was the kind of room in which no plant save an aspidistra could flourish.

" There," said Aunt Maria, " I've done it again," as she got Miss Milligan out (by not letting her left hand know what her right hand had been doing).

" Patience needs concentration. Miss Milligan beats most people because they won't concentrate."

She turned to her eldest nephew and his wife.

" I suppose we had better book rooms for August at Scarborough at the Hotel Magnificent ? "

For the last fifteen years she had made the same remark about the same time of the year, and the whole family had uprooted themselves from the pleasant purlieus of Bradford (or was it Leeds, Huddersfield or Sheffield), from where not more than a score of belching chimneys could be seen from the drawing-room windows. This year Cyril, a great-nephew, now sixteen years old and six feet tall, expostulated :

" Why Scarborough, Aunt Maria ? "

Aunt Maria's pale eyebrows rose even higher than usual ; then she shuffled the patience cards extra sharply and said :

" What's the matter with Scarborough ? "

Ted, aged fifteen, leapt loyally into the fray to support Cyril.

" Oh, of course Scarborough's all right, but we've been

there for our holidays ever since I was born ; and, you know, Aunt Maria, there are other places."

" Other places ! " Aunt Maria looked imperially pained. " You don't either of you suggest that I and your parents should go to some Lancashire resort, I hope. If Scarborough is good enough for us, I should have thought it would be good enough for you ! "

Ted groaned, and Cyril said quietly :

" Perhaps it's too good for some of us ! "

" Too good ! " ejaculated Aunt Maria ; but before she could continue, Cyril cut in :

" Anyhow, why should we all go to the same place ? We all live in the same town, almost all of us in the same district ; that's bad enough, though it isn't so bad for Ted or me as we've got Marlborough and Repton in term time, but——"

Aunt Maria turned on him and snorted.

" For fifteen years the family of Sparrow-Spinks has taken its holidays together, and there is no reason why the family of Sparrow-Spinks should not go on taking its holidays together for another fifteen years ! "

" Oh ! go—sh ! " wailed Ted.

" Remember the parrot ! " Aunt Maria said frostily, " and restrain your language."

" Perhaps," suggested Ted's mother, a gently spoken stranger from the South, and whom, in spite of her marriage of eighteen years to a West Riding man, Aunt Maria still chose to regard as a foreigner, " it might be a pleasant change for the boys and girls to go somewhere else, though, of course,

Scarborough is very agreeable to us," she glanced gracefully at the older members of the party ; " but it is quite understandable, isn't it, that the children might like a change ? "

Aunt Maria glowered. She never had liked that smoothly-spoken voice of her niece-in-law.

" Of course, if you support them, Kathleen, they'll be suggesting Torquay or Brighton or some other outlandish Southern watering-place ; but I'd have you remember this, that my mother went to Scarborough, so did my grandmother and my great-grandmother, and it's a fair insult to all the Sparrows of Sparrow Court to be told that Scarborough is not good enough for my great-nephews and nieces."

Kathleen subsided, and Isabel, the prettiest of the great-nieces and just eighteen, said very quietly :

" But, Aunt Maria, wouldn't you like to see other places—Canada or New Zealand or the Desert ? "

This remark was greeted by discreet applause from Margaret and Mary, her cousins, and from Cyril and Ted, and by subdued murmurs from other members of the family.

" I should *not*," said Aunt Maria emphatically.

" But," continued Isabel, " wouldn't you like to ride a camel across the starlit silences of Arabia or navigate a coracle through an archipelago of palm atolls in the Pacific ? "

Aunt Maria shook herself angrily.

" The North Sea is quite enough sea for me. I don't want to navigate a coracle in the Pacific or any other ocean. I'm quite content to look at a bit of sea from the window of my

bedroom in the Hotel Magnificent, and as for deserts and starlit silences, I've no use for them."

Then she rounded on Isabel's parents.

" This comes of letting the child read that man Lawrence's books and the letters of that Gertrude Bell ! "

Isabel, spurred on by signs from several of the others, followed up the attack and said dreamily :

" But, Aunt Maria, think of Popocatepetl and the Cordilleras and the Himalayas, think of all the mountain ranges of the world ! "

" I don't want to think of them and I've no particular use for mountains. I am amazed at you, Isabel, but I thought no good would come of sending you to a finishing school in Eastbourne. What has come over the whole family ? This restlessness, this wanting to ride on camels in starlit silences, is an unhealthy sign ; all this balderdash about Popocatepetl is a bad thing."

" Well, Popocatepetl would be a change after fifteen years of Scarborough," said Cyril.

" Speak when you are spoken to," replied his great-aunt. " When young people don't respect their elders, they rarely come to any good ! All this talk of other places is the influence of Bolshevism, that's what it is, and Bolshevism is like 'flu, you never know, even in the most respectable families, who may get it ; but I'll have none of it while I am head of the Sparrow-Spinks family, so make up your minds to that ! *I'm* not sailing in a coracle to palm atolls or visiting the Himalayas ; *I'm* going to the Hotel Magnificent and you're

all coming with me. Now, I'll put it to the vote ; those in favour of going to Scarborough, please signify in the usual way."

Reluctantly, one by one the hands went up.

" Where's your hand, Cyril ? "

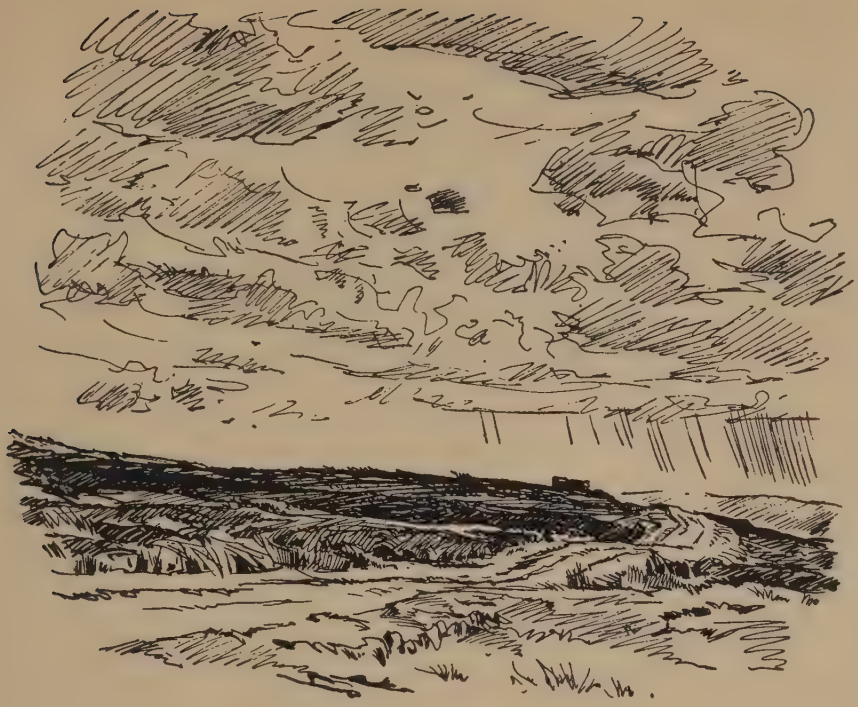
" Oh, Lord ! Kamerad ! " exclaimed Cyril, raising both hands.

" The Lord has nothing to do with this, so don't be irreverent, Cyril."

She looked round at the family, then cut the cards and prepared to try Miss Milligan again.

" Well, that's been put to the entire family meeting and the voting has been unanimous. I'll write to the Hotel Magnificent to-night. Bring the parrot's cover, Cyril. I'm glad that's settled ! "

RIDING TO THE DALEHEAD



RIDING TO THE DALEHEAD

RIDING to the Dale-head,
Lad, what shall we find
On this April morning,
You, I and the wind ?
Riding on the moor-tops
See the rosy fun
Given this April evening
To us by the westing sun.

Riding to the dale-end,
  Lad, how soon—too soon—
Night will share her sorrow
  With us two and the moon ;
Riding thro' the river
  Dark and swift and wide,
Lad, lend me your courage,
  Love, keep at my side.

THE CALLER

THE CALLER

NOT being keen about seeing the kill, I left the field on Witton Fell and made my way home by little tracks across the moors—not perhaps the quickest, but certainly the bonniest way back.

The far hills were a quiet grey—a grey veering to blue, and there was a brooding light over the moors and the intake. My horse whinnied as he came up the Gell Gate, and I thought how welcome a hot tub would be and, after it, a quiet tea by the log fire.

At the sound of my horse's hoofs three Cairn puppies—so beautiful they should be kennelled in heaven—dashed out to meet me.

" There's a gentleman called to see you," the groom said, as he held my horse's head.

" What a nuisance," I thought ; then I asked :

" Why didn't Mary say I was out ? "

" She did, ma'am, but the gentleman said he would wait."

I made my way towards the house. The door was opened by the caller, a man somewhere about forty years of age and of medium height. He came forward and said, holding out his hand :

" Hullo ! how are you ? "

I was puzzled. As I took his outstretched hand I had time to notice his soft, dark hair, sun-tanned skin and lazy, direct blue eyes.

He smiled indolently.

" You don't seem to remember me ! "

I replied frankly :

" No, I do not," and noticed that he was clean-shaven and that when he smiled his mouth had an odd way of rising at one corner. In a hazy manner I recollected having seen some one else with the same curious twisted smile, but I had no definite remembrance of the person to whom it belonged.

" Well," he said, following me into the house, " I'm staying to tea, so you'll have plenty of time to remember."

Quickly I turned and took in his navy blue suit, his well-shaped hands, and wondered where on earth we had met.

I mounted the stairs and called out :

" Mary, will you bring tea, and keep the puppies with you, please " ; then to him, " I'll be down in a moment, but I must get this hard hat off first."

I was so intrigued by my caller that I quite forgot that through his visit I should have to defer that much-longed-for hot bath.

When I came downstairs he was standing before the sitting-room fire, holding all three puppies in a bunch in his arms and teasing them.

" I thought that I asked Mary to take them."

At that moment Mary came in with the tea-things.

" I wanted to take them," she said, " but Mr. Dane said he'd keep them ! "

Mr. Dane. I was more puzzled than ever. When she left the room, I said :

" Well, it is interesting to know your name."

" It's on the card I handed to your maid on my arrival ! "

" Do you take sugar and cream ? " I inquired.

He smiled lazily and sat down.

" Considering you've poured out tea for me scores of times, you ought to know."

" You must be mistaking me for somebody like me. Really, I have not the vaguest idea who you are. I only know that you came on a Vauxhall car, which is in the yard, that your name is Dane, and that from your general appearance you might be in the Navy."

" Then I have a great advantage over you, for I know your name, your age and your occupation. I wonder if you're still as fond of maps as you used to be."

" This isn't fair," I expostulated, and again I looked intently at his amused eyes and oddly twisted mouth.

He replied, " I've been inspecting your bookshelves during your absence, and find that they are mostly filled with travel books, Marco Polo, the North-west Passage, Moby Dick, Sir Richard Grenville—charts and old maps. I think it was that illustrated ' Treasure Island ' that first started you longing for islands of your own to discover."

I was mystified.

He continued, " Tell me, how many islands have you

annexed? It was once your proud boast that whatever group you wanted to visit you'd get there before me."

I gave up the riddle, and replied in a humour matching his:

"I've just returned from the Orkneys, and specially claim Graemsay where the seal-pups play."

He bowed.

"I was on the Orkneys before you. I was there before the War, so they belong to me."

"Last year I was on Skye and Raasay, North and South Uist, Jura, Canna and Mull."

"Canna and Raasay are yours, but I was tramping on the others nearly twenty years ago."

"Well, I claim the Farne Islands, and every guillemot on them!"

"They are yours," he said; "but they are rocks rather than islands."

"And Lundy?"

"No, I had a week's bathing there in that delightful bay facing south when I was a schoolboy."

I looked further a-sea and said:

"I hold Visby, Bornholm, the Swedish Archipelago and about eighteen thousand islands off the southern coast of Finland."

"I don't grant your claim. When were you in the Baltic?"

"Three years ago."

"Well, they are mine, for I was cruising round the lot with a pal in a ten-tonner on one of my first leaves."

" What about Sicily ? " I hazarded.

" Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, the Balearics and Malta are easily mine."

" Perhaps you will leave me the Scillies," I said sarcastically.

" Why the hell should I ! " he said. " *You* used to grab every island you could when you were a kid. Of all the greedy island-snatchers, you were the greediest I've ever known, and you've not altered a bit."

He smiled lazily and continued :

" I should have known *you* again wherever I had met you."

His mouth twisted a trifle bitterly and he said :

" You've not changed much, but I suppose the years have treated me pretty badly, as you don't recognise me."

Then he said more roughly :

" Now then, do you remember the licking I gave you for sticking your ship on Juan Fernandez—Robinson Crusoe's Island. It was my turn to choose and not yours ; but then, whenever did a girl play fair ! "

He paused for a moment, then continued, " At any rate, one group belongs to me ; I can truly claim some share in the Falklands."

" Have you been to the Falkland Isles ? " I asked, and visions of that lonely colony in the western hemisphere passed before my mind; visions of ugly little Sturdee, of gallant Von Spee ; I saw the great hulls of the *Scharnhorst* and the *Gneisenau*, the *Inflexible* and the *Invincible*, the smoke, the flame, the thunder of a great naval engagement.

" I missed the big scrap," he said, " because I was on the old *Canopus*; she was in harbour with engine trouble. Our captain, Heathcote-Grant got her behind some sandhills. We housed her topmasts, then we camouflaged her sides with mud; for commanding the approaches to the wireless station her twelve-inch guns were just the thing. When the range between the Germans and ourselves was down to about thirteen thousand, the old *Canopus's* guns bellowed a challenge. You know they were the first guns to speak. Oh! I claim the Falklands; yes, I claim the lot, my sweet coz!"

I looked again at his grey-blue eyes and twisted mouth, and then I suddenly remembered him.

" You must be my cousin Neville Dane, but I've never seen you since you were fifteen. You were a most hateful boy!"

He smiled.

" And you were ten and the greediest little island-snatcher"—he lit a cigarette—" why, I made a new proverb specially for you: 'Never count your islands until they are snatched!'"

" Yes," I said; " I remember it. Oh! in those far-off days I disliked you more than anything else on this earth."

He replied calmly:

" And I loved teasing you more than anything else under heaven."

" And so you were with the old *Canopus* in the Falklands?"

" Where's your atlas? Let's have a map out and I'll

show you just where we were and where we first sighted Von Spee's lot."

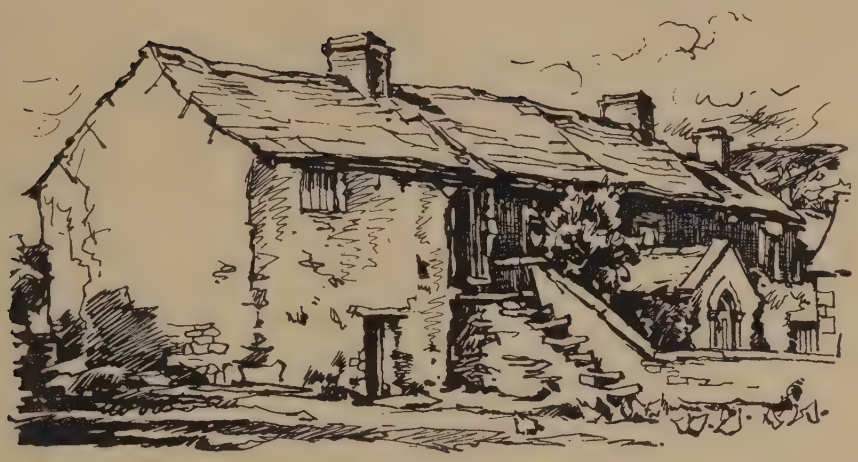
I took down the big atlas containing a map of Southern America. We both bent over and examined it.

" Here are the Magellan Straits. Earlier on we were through here with the Colliers, doing our twelve knots an hour ; north-east are the Falklands ; this map is on too small a scale to see East Falkland, but Port Stanley's here, and Port William is close by."

" Neville," I expostulated, " don't push. I've as good a right to the map as you have."

" Sorry," he whispered, and I felt an arm around my shoulders. Then suddenly the years slithered away and we were both back in the old school-room leaning over a much-worn Mercator, ink-marked all over with our imaginary cruises and gay with miniature flags that we had planted over islands that each of us had captured and claimed.

FARMER HODGSON'S PRAYER



FARMER HODGSON'S PRAYER

"THOO knaw, dear Lord, I wurn't one
For ever begging on Thee,
'At when my lile sorrows came
I suffered silently ;

For folk so often ask Thy help
When they should aid thersen,
An' same as sparks fly up, I knaw
'At trouble cooms to men.

But sitha! I'se at my wit's end,
An' noo I need a hand,
I've fought like hell, withooten Thee;
But Thoo wilt onderstand

For Thoo dost knaw about my lads,
'At my owd lass is ailing,
'At t'farm is mortgaged up to t'roof,
An' hay an' roots is failing;

Two hundred year have we been here,
It's terrible hard to quit. . . .
Tho' I'se nigh broken, give me, Lord,
Grit to work on wi'—GRIT!"

THE SCHOOLMASTER OF CRAKELANDS

WHERNIE

THE SCHOOLMASTER OF CRAKELANDS

WATERPROOFED and rubber-booted, I went out to post some parcels in the village, and, as I walked up the path to the tiny post office, gaunt John Rogers made way for me in the narrow doorway as he was coming out. He was dressed in his Sunday coat and seemed oblivious to the rain and of how his good coat, his black hat, tie and gloves would be spoiled.

"Good evening, Mr. Rogers."

He looked at me intently, took off his hat and walked on down the pathway. He was a tall, thin man, and stooped badly for his fifty years. His eyebrows overhung quick, shy grey eyes, his eagle nose dominated a sensitive mouth and deeply indented chin. He lived in the small schoolhouse up at Crakelands on the edge of the moorlands, and taught the elder children of the farmers and labourers round about.

I wondered why he had come down to the village at so late an hour. He rarely left Crakelands on week-days, and was never known to come our way after nightfall. He seldom spoke to anyone save his pupils; but, from the way several of his boys won scholarships, he must have been a very thorough teacher. He lived quite alone, ordering his own

provisions, washing and mending his own clothes and cooking his own food.

Twenty years ago, so the moor-folk said, John Rogers went to a Flower Show at Masham, the nearest market town. He was very fond of flowers, and when no one else so near to the moorland could grow dahlias Mr. Rogers always had a beautiful show of single and double cactus. He protected them every night from frost by covering them with old lace curtains. This was the only use he had for lace curtains, for he never had any at his windows. " Pity to shut out the sky ! " was all he once said when questioned about the matter.

At the Masham Show he took a second prize for asters, the first being won by another schoolmaster named Alexander Headley, who had left his daughter Elsie to look after his exhibits for him.

Rogers studied the first prize asters for a long time, walking backwards and forwards from his own second prize ones to Alexander Headley's first prizers, and the more often he looked at both, the less reason could he find for the judges' decision. A couple of hours passed in this way, and Elsie Headley, sitting on her little stool behind her father's asters, could not help but notice the tall, lank man who was so carefully examining both exhibits. Just before the tents closed she made a movement and began collecting her asters. John Rogers looked up at the girl and saw a pretty, bright young face under a navy blue hat. She was wearing a very perfect aster in her buttonhole—a dark purple one—nearly as dark as her own dark eyes.

" It must have been a difficult job for the judges to decide between yours and ours," she said kindly, and, after packing away her vases, she turned to him and said :

" I'm Mr. Headley's daughter, the schoolmaster at Whernie. You're Mr. Rogers from Crakelands, aren't you ? Shall I give you a hand to help you clear up ? Eh ! aren't they beauties ! " as she picked John Rogers' flowers out of his vases.

After that, he forgot both her flowers and his, and kept looking at her in the same concentrated way as he had looked at the asters. Then she said brightly :

" I've to wait here while Father comes. Shall we have some tea ? I'm right fain for a cup of tea ! "

" By all means," said Mr. Rogers, and followed her into the tea-tent. There she found two seats at the end of a long, almost deserted table, and over a cup of tea told him about their Michaelmas daisies, and what the wind did to their garden at Whernie.

" It'll be more sheltered from the west wind, your garden at Crakelands. Folk say it's an awfully bonnie spot. Do you keep bees ? Bees would do well with heather so near and all those trees in the apple garth. Haven't you anyone to help you ? Now, that's too bad ! A man can't be teaching all day long, correcting exercises most of the night, and have to look after himself as well. However do you manage ? '

" I don't know," said Mr. Rogers truthfully, gazing directly into her aster-blue eyes.

" Oh ! you ought to get some help ; you surely ought ;

it's too bad trying to do everything. Why, here's Father! Father, this is Mr. Rogers; he's the schoolmaster up at Crakelands."

John Rogers stood up and shook hands with a blithe, good-natured man who looked more like a farmer than the traditional schoolmaster.

"I congratulate you on winning first prize in asters," he said.

"Mr. Rogers got second," chimed in his daughter, "but they were just as good as ours, Father."

"Is that so? Well, I've as good as these still left, if you care to come over to see them, Mr. Rogers. We're not so far away—only seven miles by moor, as the crow flies, and you look a good walker. Come over any Sunday for roast beef and Yorkshire pudding; any Sunday that you've a mind to"; and, with a pretty smile, Elsie Headley seconded the invitation.

. . . . . .

The Sunday after the Flower Show, John Rogers dressed himself most carefully, black coat and Sunday hat, best tie, collar and shirt, and started off on the moorland track from Crakelands to Whernie. The road rises gently all the way, nearly eight miles. Whernie lies in a small cup-like valley about four hundred feet below the moor, and from the moor-top the track zigzags fairly steeply down to the village of Whernie.

John Rogers sat down and rested before making the descent. Two lads came up, and he questioned them as to

which was Mr. Headley's house. They pointed out a stone house surrounded by a bosky garden larger than the other houses in the village. At its magnificence, John Roger's shyness overcame him. He mopped his forehead and gazed at the house, noting the smoke as it rose from the stone chimneys. He waited a long time until it was past dinner-time, then, fearing that it was too late to call, he made his way back across the moorlands to his own schoolhouse.

Next Sunday, he set off again, but got drenched through, and felt timid at presenting himself in such a state, so again he turned back, after gazing intently at the smoke arising from the Whernie schoolhouse.

Each Sunday he set out, each Sunday he returned without having dared to call ; always attired in his best coat, until it became quite a recognized thing for him to go over to Whernie, and folk in Crakelands, after the second year, began to wonder how t'schoolmeaster fared with his courtin'. After a while he gave up all idea of calling or of courting, but by this time he had learned to love the moorland tramp, and would have missed the sight of the blue smoke rising from the Headleys' chimney.

When Mrs. Headley died he tried to make a special effort to call, but his courage left him at the moor-top, and he came back and wrote a poor little note of sympathy instead. He received a kind letter in reply from Elsie Headley, who wrote that her father would be pleased to see him any time ; and this hurt him, for he could not understand why she did not

write that she, too, would be glad to see him. He kept thinking this over, and the thought of her not welcoming him as well prevented him from getting any nearer Whernie than the moor-top track.

. . . . . .

"Of all t'daft, shy craturs, he takes the cake!" said the postmistress. "Wilta believe that for twenty years he's been trampin' ower t'moor to have a glimpse of t'smoke fra Elsie Headley's chimleys. Last week he read in t'paper how, owin' to her father's death, there would be a sale held in t'house of all his furnitoor. Elsie Headley 'ull be left varra badly off, poor lass; lookin' after her parents, she's niver been able to addle ony brass for herself. When he heard, he were terrible consarned, and that's why he was doon here this evening in his black coat an' all; he wanted me to help him send a telegram.

'Miss Bell,' said he, 'it's no use. I've been trying to call at Whernie nearly every Sunday for twenty years; but I want you to help me send a telegram to Miss Headley. I want to ask her if she'll wed me. Will you, please, prepay it. Do you think she'll answer it, Miss Bell,' he said.

I told him how she'd said 'Nay' to two others whilst waitin' for him to make up his fond, foolish mind."

"And will she wed him?" I asked.

"At ony rate, he's sent her an offer!"

. . . . . .

A week later I saw our postmistress and asked her how the schoolmaster of Crakelands was faring with his courting.

She said, " I've not heard anything for certain, but last Sunday he got as far as her house, for all t'bairns in Whernie saw him a-seekin' t'knocker on her front door, an' when he took t'moor track back to Crakelands he was a-whistling a tune 'at Miss Headley has on her gramophone, and it wurn't no hymn-tune either ! "

PARTING WITH JERRY-GO-NIMBLE

PARTING WITH JERRY-GO-NIMBLE

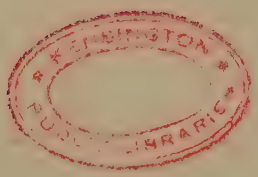
YESTER Jerry was ridden away,
An' while he was out o' sight
Laverton rang with his well-known neigh,
An' all thro' t'night

I dreamed I saw by t'light of t'moon
Shadow of Jerry on t'lawn,
T'echo, I heard, of cantering hoofs
At t'edge o' dawn.

His stable weän't be empty a week. . . .
But is a new horse a friend ?
A better nor Jerry'll be hard to seek,
I'd kept him while t'end.

Happen he wurn't easy to hold
With a mouth as hard as iron,
But then, by gow, he'd a heart of gold
An' t'pluck of a lion !

SYD KADSON



AT "THE BLACKAMOOR"

SYD KADSON

(A ONE-ACT PLAY)

CHARACTERS :

SYD KADSON, *a slightly built man of fifty years with thick, iron-grey hair and shifty grey eyes. He has heavy lines on his forehead and around his thin, loose mouth.*

NED NEWBOULD, *tall and lean, with hungry, dog-like eyes.*

JIM BURT, *a thickset man of forty years, bald, and abrupt in speaking.*

MRS. BUNDELL, *a widow of about fifty. She is stout and wears a black silk dress with a lace berthe fastened with a large silver brooch on which is written " Mother " in big letters.*

TIME : *A Saturday evening.*

PLACE : *The cosy bar parlour of the Blackamoor Inn.* MRS. BUNDELL *sits on a high stool behind the bar. On the right is a long settle and a fireplace ; at the back a window in which are some pelargoniums in flower. Left is a door and a dresser, and there is an oil lamp hung from the middle of the ceiling. A rocking chair and other chairs are scattered about the small room.*

MRS. BUNDELL *is knitting, turning the heel of a boy's sock; the three men are smoking pipes and at their elbows each has a pewter mug.*

JIM BURT (*setting down his mug and picking up the evening paper, which he tries to read*): You've no proof, onyway——

SYD KADSON: Proof? I doän't say I've any proof, an' I doän't say I haven't. I'm nobbut telling you what is t'talk of Masham Market. I've heard it many times, but when Nicholas Wayburn told me, well—you know Nicholas Wayburn wouldn't say owt he didn't believe, would he?

NED NEWBOULD (*waveringly*): You're right, Syd: Nicholas Wayburn is a straight-speakin' man.

MRS. BUNDELL (*looking directly at* KADSON, *after reaching the end of a line in ker knitting*): *Did* Nicholas Wayburn say a word against Edward Carr?

SYD KADSON (*ignoring her question*): Of course, Edward Carr never was what you might call a popular man; he never was t'kind of man you could ever really know, an' he never was liked.

JIM BURT: There are folks what like him and folks what doän't like him; he's no different in that way to most of us.

NED NEWBOULD: Nay, but Syd's right. (*He takes a few puffs at his pipe, then continues.*) Edward Carr allus was very standoffish, even when he first came into t'Dale, an' then he was nobbut a farm-hand.

SYD KADSON: Aye! an' that's what Nicholas Wayburn wants to know an' some others that I could mention—how has a farm-hand addled such a sight of brass. There's not many farm-hands that own their own farms in this Riding.

He takes a long drink, rises and carries his mug to the counter to be refilled. MRS. BUNDELL *refills it, then writes on the slate hanging on the wall on her right. Resuming his seat in the rocking-chair,* KADSON *speaks as if to himself.*

Stands to reason, doän't it, that a man who comes into this Dale without a penny in his pocket, and in less than twenty-five years owns five of t'best farms in Yorkshire, must have done summat very different to what most farm-hands do so as to have saved enough brass to buy 'em!

NED NEWBOULD (*examining his pipe, which is pulling badly*): I always wondered how he put by t'brass to buy Netherly Ledge. It's four hundred and fifty acres, and not a poor acre among 'em—no intake with bents an' whins—no ings, every acre good for pasturage or plough-land.

JIM BURT: Riddersley Farm is a sight better land nor Netherly Ledge, an' t'cow byres an' outbuildings are a treat to go through.

SYD KADSON (*questioning the flies on the ceiling*): How did Edward Carr, farm-hand, come by enough brass to buy sich farms?

JIM BURT (*putting down the evening paper and warming his hands at the fire from his seat on the long settle*): Onyway, he's

t'richest farmer to-day anywhere about and could easily buy you up, Syd Kadson, with your stonemasoning and bricklaying, an' me with my plumbing, and Newbould and his grocery stores, and then have summat left over——

He resumes his reading.

SYD KADSON: Aye (*taking a long drink*), aye, an' then have summat left ower to buy Mary Carr a new market float.

MRS. BUNDELL (*quietly, continuing her knitting*): Has he bought a new market float for Mary Carr?

NED NEWBOULD: It'll make a great difference to Edward Carr now that John Carr is wedded.

SYD KADSON: An' it's a good thing for John that Edward sets such store by his wife Mary.

NED NEWBOULD: My owd woman told me that Edward Carr couldn't bide to look at any woman for years.

MRS. BUNDELL: Aye, she said true, no more he could; but then he had scarcely a word for any living soul after he lost Esther Carr.

SYD KADSON: That were twenty years ago; a man can forget a deal in twenty years.

MRS. BUNDELL: Aye, some men can, but not Edward Carr; an' women like Esther Carr are not easily forgotten.

She finishes a line of her knitting and putting it down looks at KADSON.

Their love for each other was summat passin' t'understandin' of men of your stamp, Syd Kadson. Edward Carr will never

forget Esther (*she pauses, and resumes her knitting*), an' he'll never put another woman in her place.

NED NEWBOULD (*still smoking uneasily*) : She was delicate-lookin', I mind, was Mrs. Carr, lile an' lady-like, an' I recollect my owd stepmother sayin' she'd never frame for a farmer's wife. She came from some girt town t'other side of t'Pennines. It was hard for Edward Carr to lose both Esther and t'bairn at one and t'same time.

JIM BURT : Aye.

SYD KADSON : Happen it was for t'best. He wouldn't have got on like he has with a wife and a bairn to fettle for. Onyway, he's still got an eye for an upstandin' lass (*he smiles to himself knowingly*), an' you must own that Mary Carr *is* a very handsome girl !

MRS. BUNDELL : Mary Carr is as bonnie as a posy of cowslips.

SYD KADSON (*he rises and hands his mug to* MRS. BUNDELL *to be refilled*) : It's strange that John Carr is t'ony man in Wensleydale that hasn't noticed how often Edward looks at his wife.

NED NEWBOULD (*uneasily*) : But John Carr is Edward's own cousin, once removed. Edward gave John his schooling, sent him to a swell Agricultural College to learn newfangled ways of farming. Edward's treated John as good as if John was his own an' Esther's son.

JIM BURT : Nay, he's been better nor most fathers. There isn't such a main of fathers would give Riddersley Farm to a son when he got wed.

SYD KADSON (*sitting down*) : An' folk say that Edward Carr goes to Riddersley a deal more nowadays than ever he did afore John was wed.

JIM BURT (*turning to look at him sharply*) : An' why not with a bright girl like Mary to greet him at his journey's end ?

SYD KADSON : An' likely as not he stays an' has a long chat ower many cups of tea with a bright girl like Mary (*he pauses to take a drink*), especially if John Carr is out milkin' or on t'intake foldin' his sheep.

NED NEWBOULD : Well, there'll be plenty for John to do at Riddersley.

SYD KADSON : There will an' all, an' it must be pleasant-like for John when he's out workin' to know that his wife is not lonesome without him, as his first cousin, once removed, helps her to pass t'weary hours when he's away !

JIM BURT (*brusquely*) : What they do is no concern of ours !

NED NEWBOULD (*fidgeting with his pipe*) : I like John ; he's a pleasant-spoken lad. He thinks t'world of Mary ; so did his mother. His mother was very set on his having no one save Mary.

MRS. BUNDELL : His mother was very fond of Mary, an' never had a word to say against her (*she pauses to count the stitches*), even though she didn't care much about most East Riding folk.

NED NEWBOULD : Mary was a bit of a stranger to dale ways when she first came.

JIM BURT: Well, she frames bonnily, an' a man might travel a year of Sundays an' not speak to a pleasanter-spoken lass.

SYD KADSON: Pleasant-spoken! (*He taps with his fingers on the handle of his mug.*) Aye! that's it; it's that pleasant-speakin', as you might say, what takes Edward Carr to Riddersley three or four times a week.

JIM BURT: Aye! an' any other man if he had t'chance!

NED NEWBOULD: There's little doubt but what Edward Carr means John to have Hinton Grange, Crawby, Mossy Mire an' Lower Litton when his time cooms!

SYD KADSON: Well, nowt for nowt in this world, an happen John will have to give a lot to get 'em.

MRS. BUNDELL (*as if speaking to herself*): Some folks' tongues are like racehorses: the lighter weight they carry, the faster they gang.

JIM BURT *looks at* KADSON *quickly, begins to speak, then checks himself.*

NED NEWBOULD: Aye! as you say, nowt for nowt, but John's worked very hard for Edward Carr, holidays, fair-days an' Sundays; he's never taken time off for laikin' same as other lads.

SYD KADSON (*shifting his eyes from* NEWBOULD'S *face to* BURT'S): There's more than holidays and Sundays some men would give up for t'sake of owning Hinton Grange, Crawby, Mossy Mire and Lower Linton.

MRS. BUNDELL (*sotto voce*): Aye! some men!

NED NEWBOULD: John has saved his wages ever since he left school.

At last the pipe draws easily, and he continues speaking between the puffs.

Edward larned him to save, an' my owd woman says that Mary is t'savin' sort, too.

SYD KADSON (*leaning forward and addressing* NEWBOULD): If John has saved such a sight of brass, why should Edward buy that red float of Simpson's for Mary, an' have it all done up for her?

NED NEWBOULD: You doän't say so! When did he buy Simpson's red float? My missus hasn't heard owt of Edward buying Simpson's red float.

SYD KADSON (*leaning back in his chair*): Well, he *has* bought it, and he's having it painted bright yellow with black lines, according to Mary Carr's fancy.

JIM BURT (*spitting*): An' why not? Simpson's red float was enough to make even an owd cow go mad. Yellow with black lines will look a deal better.

SYD KADSON (*to* JIM BURT): If John has as much brass as you think he has, then why couldn't he buy Simpson's float an' all them garden plants for his own wife?

JIM BURT *makes a movement of disgust.*

NED NEWBOULD: Garden plants? I've never heard nowt about garden plants!

SYD KADSON: Aye, rose-trees an' lily bulbs, an' pansies an' such-like trash.

MRS. BUNDELL (*quietly*) : Flowers isn't " such-like trash " to most folk, Mr. Kadson.

SYD KADSON (*ignoring her remark*) : Robert Oldfield, you ken t'market gardener's lad, told me that Edward Carr said to his gaffer (he was a-listenin' at t'keyhole, was t'lad), " Send all them flowers to-morrow, without fail. They are for young Mrs. Carr's birthday ; she's very fond of flowers an' misses 'em here in these parts after her father's garden " ; an' Robert Oldfield told me he saw t'account, an' it was seven pounds eighteen shillings an' ninepence !

NED NEWBOULD (*laying down his pipe*) : You doän't say so ! Eh ! my missus will be capped !

SYD KADSON : Seven pounds eighteen shillings and ninepence for Mary Carr's birthday, an' I've heard that she and Edward spent most of her birthday plantin' flowers in t'border behind t'owd yew hedge. (*Tapping his fingers on the pewter mug.*) You recollect t'border that is out of sight of t'house windows.

MRS. BUNDELL : Mary's father was head gardener at Willoughby Hall ; it was a very bonny place with wall gardens and lawns and flower-beds, an' Mary will miss such a garden in these parts. It's no easy thing to make a fine garden in Riddersley ; t'west wind cuts round every part save t'border screened by t'owd yew hedge.

She walks over and closes the little window.

SYD KADSON : But t'flowers weren't t'ony birthday present Mary got. Do you mind those old-fashioned cameos

either Church or Chapel, an' he can't act as if he was God Almighty just because he's t'richest farmer in Wensleydale.

MRS. BUNDELL (*standing up and laying down her knitting*): Nor you can't say what you like, Syd Kadson, tho' you've t'meanest tongue in Wensleydale. (*She turns to the others.*) As you all know, I'm a widow woman, and t'Blackamoor is my livelihood, an' I doän't like driving any custom away—every customer means summat to me with four bairns to rear—but custom or no custom, you shall not sit in my bar parlour, Syd Kadson, and stir up strife by insinuating cruel things about Edward Carr or John and Mary Carr. (*Raising her voice.*) How Edward Carr came by his brass is no concern of mine or yours, how John Carr worked for him is no concern of mine or yours, but how Mary Carr is spoken of is *my* concern and the concern of every other honest woman who knows her. Mary Carr is a new-comer to this country, and, from what I've seen of her, she's a kindly, well-reared lass, and it would be to my everlastin' shame if I sat quietly here (*she walks into the middle of the room*) and allowed you, Syd Kadson, to leave this room without telling you that you're a liar—a mean, cruel, dirty, backbiting liar, who loves lying for t'sake of lying, for t'sake of hearing your own disgusting tongue a-wagging!

JIM BURT (*to* KADSON): You deserve all you get!

MRS. BUNDELL: Never come into this parlour again, Syd Kadson; nor you, Ned Newbould, nor you Jim Burt, if either of you believe his hellish inventions.

JIM BURT: Don't take on so, Mrs. Bundell.

MRS. BUNDELL (*with a break in her voice, to* KADSON): Whya cannot you leave folk what are settled and happy alone? Why must your muck-heap of a mind try to soil what is clean and bonnie? Withdraw your lies, Syd Kadson, or never cross the threshold of t'Blackamoor Inn again!

SYD KADSON (*pretending to be amazed at this outburst, and turning to* NEWBOULD *and* BURT): What have *I* said? I never said owt against Mary Carr. I've done nowt save repeat what other folk have said; what all Masham Market were saying!

MRS. BUNDELL (*scornfully*): You're a coward as well as a liar, Syd Kadson. I've had to sit here and hear many a foul tale pass your lips—a widow with four bairns can't afford to be too particular what she hears—but a fouler tale has never passed your lips than t'one you've told here to-night. If it travelled beyond this inn, it would break up the happiness of three good folk—break it up as quick as a bairn's coloured balloon is burst when pricked: aye, three good folk who've never done you a minute's harm.

JIM BURT (*rising and going over to* MRS. BUNDELL): Come, come, Mrs. Bundell, doän't take on so. Doän't be vexed an putten about. Look here, I've known Syd Kadson a few years, an' I've never believed any of his tales yet. Newbould there would swallow any story like t'whale did Jonah; but I know better. T'matter with Syd is, tho' he's very regular at passing t'box round at Chapel, he's got t'sin of envy written all over him. (*Turning to look at* KADSON.) Look at them shifty eyes—more like a ferret's nor a man's; he's envious

of any man who has done better nor he has. I reckon nowt to him. Doän't worry, Mrs. Bundell, most folk know him.

SYD KADSON (*with a sickly smile*) : Aye ! but you will have your little joke, Jim.

NED NEWBOULD (*nervously*) : But this is hardlins a joke, Syd.

JIM BURT : Anyway, cheer up, Mrs. Bundell, there aren't many made in Syd's mould, and I know, for I've been in most parts of t'world—in Canada, wheat-farming ; in Australia horse-breakin' ; in South Africa, in t'mines, all afore I come back to Wensleydale, an' you take my word for it, Syd Kadson is t'only real gutter-rat I've ever drunk with, an' for owt I know even *he* may once have been a blue-eyed angel of a child—who knows ! He *may* have been, but to-day he's a damn fool, a skunk an' a liar.

NED NEWBOULD : But he's a local preacher, Burt ; you can't say such things to a local preacher !

JIM BURT : Local preacher or not, Syd Kadson, hark to me ! If ever I hear that story about Edward Carr and John and Mary Carr again from any soul in this or any other dale (*goes over to* KADSON, *who rises apprehensively*), I'll find you out, though you're hundreds of miles away, an' I'll do you in though I swing for it. (*Nodding to* MRS. BUNDELL *and in a cheery voice.*) Good night, Mrs. Bundell.

Exit JIM BURT.

MRS. BUNDELL (*wiping a tear from her eye*) : That's what my man would have said if he had been here, God bless him !

SYD KADSON (*sits on an arm of his chair and nervously taps on his mug*) : What a pother ower nowt—an' there's a story about a Coverdale girl an' Burt that's goin' around ; he can't afford to be so chuff with me, I can tell you.

NED NEWBOULD (*weakly trying to make a stand*) : Hold on a bit. Burt's a brave lad ; he'd play fair by any girl.

SYD KADSON (*with a sneer*) : Would he ?

MRS. BUNDELL : You must go, both of you ; it's closing time (*turning to* KADSON, *who has opened the door*) ; but you what's been a local preacher might add this to your prayers next Sabbath (KADSON *waits to hear*) :

From all mean, lyin', uncharitable thoughts,
Good Lord deliver us !

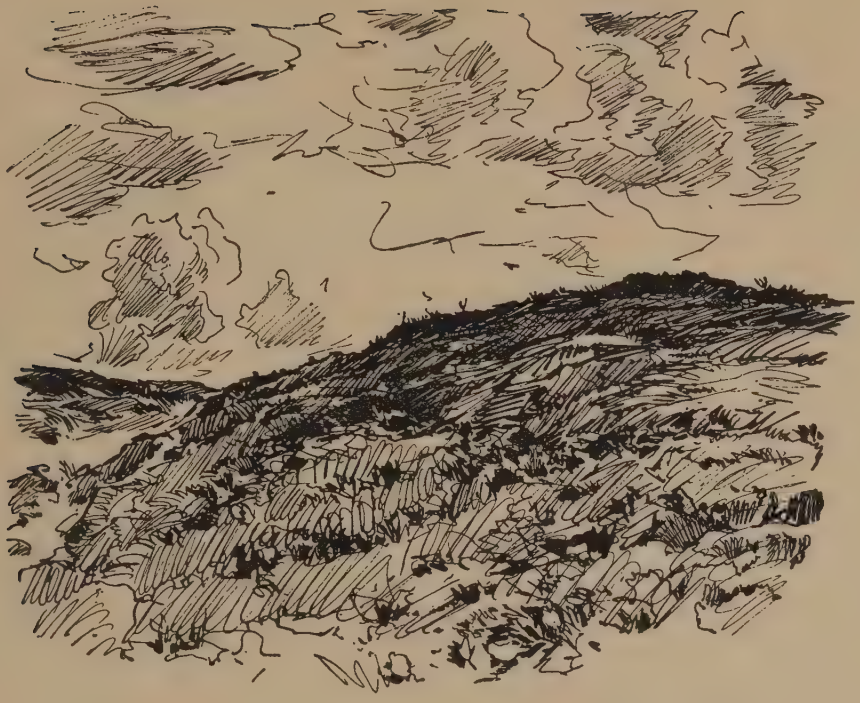
KADSON *swings out of the door, left, and* NEWBOULD *follows him, closing the door gently.*

MRS. BUNDELL (*calling after them*) : Good night, Ned Newbould.

She comes in, locks the door decisively, and turns her back upon it.

The Curtain falls.

ON GOATHLAND MOOR



ON GOATHLAND MOOR

WILD bee in the heather
Summer is here, and both of us gather—
You go gathering beyond my ken,
I gather honey for the hearts of men.

YULETIDE IN NIDDERDALE

YULETIDE IN NIDDERDALE

THE time was dusk. From the window I could see a shivering moon climbing through the bare branches of the sycamores. Its light cleft with shadows the rocks on the skyline, and lit up the river so that it flowed through the dark dale like a trickle of quicksilver. An owl hooted from time to time, and, after a few moments, I drew the chintz curtains and welcomed the lamplight and the crackling larchen fire.

Just as I had chosen a book—a volume of Border Ballads —Mary entered.

" There's a person, an old person, asking to see you. He says he used to know you a while since. I think," she added kindly, " he's walked a goodish distance."

A few minutes later she announced my visitor.

He was an old man ; his hair was long and his beard was silver-grey and sparkled with the melting frost. He wore a battered hat and a long coat nearly reaching his feet, and over it a weather-worn cape.

I held out my hand.

"I think I know your face, but I have forgotten your name. We must have met many years ago."

He smiled. His cheeks were apple-red, and his eyes were grey, imprisoned by a host of little laughing wrinkles. Then he spoke, and his voice recalled firelit nurseries, and dolls with clothes that really were made to put on and take off.

"I thought I would call in passing to see whether you remembered me. I don't know whether you have improved" —he scrutinised me keenly—"but you were an adorable child; yours was a beautiful fealty. In your loyalty to me, I have heard you get passionately enraged. I have heard you refuse to credit all the stories of my desertion or of my death. I have had few lealer lovers than you once were, and it was because of auld lang syne I thought I would come and see whether I could be of any service to you now. Is there anything I could do for a little girl of yours? Somehow," and he said it wistfully, "I feel that a little girl of yours might still believe in me."

Regretfully, I told him that there was no special little girl, but a large number of small dale-folk had a place in my heart.

"Ah," he said very mournfully, "I saw them this morning. The mistress of the infants is a friend of mine, too. Will you believe it, when she attempted to tell them about me, there was a chorus of little voices, 'Don't you know he isn't real?' Since then, I have wandered about the dale, but all the doors are closed and the shutters are drawn. I saw your face at the window by the light of the moon, and, recognising you, I thought I would rest here a while."

He sat beside the fire, and I poured him out a cup of tea. Cutting him a slice of Christmas cake, I said:

"I remember quite well how I used to save my cake and leave it for you—that was how I knew you had come, because the cake always disappeared. I hoped other children would remember, because parcel-carrying is a hungry occupation."

After putting his cup down, he turned towards me and said:

"What I can't understand is this—why does nobody believe in me nowadays? Can you credit it! I haven't received a single order from a Dale mother this Yuletide?"

To pacify him I answered, "There has been a long coal strike this year and times have been hard; perhaps they cannot afford to pay."

"Pay! Not a small coin out of the savings of their children's love? Then parents have truly become misers; a little child has love and to spare for the whole world."

"Don't be too hard on them."

"Well, it's a dowly thing at my time of life not to be wanted, and I loved my work. Oh! the joy of carrying just the right parcel to the right child. I never made any mistakes. Oh, no! I knew the little souls' wants beforehand. Yes! I love my work, and every Yuletide, when I used to put on my cloak and hat, my heart would sing with pleasure like a rollicking beck. I want my work; surely there are a few others besides you, Doy, who would be glad to see me?"

He paused to finish the cake, then continued:

"I am a king without a kingdom; heaps worse off than other dethroned kings because I love my kingdom."

I could see that he was getting too introspective, so I said in as philosophical a voice as I could:

"Listen! if you find the old world changing, and not wanting one sort of work, you must seek other work instead. What happened to all the old cab-drivers when every one hailed taxis? They found other work, and so must you. You are still hearty, so don't be downcast. When you have found other work, I'll come and see you, and we'll have some lovely chats about old days. Cheer up, because you have always brought so much cheer to others."

A tear rolled down his old face, and as I stopped to brighten the fire, I felt his hand on my head for a moment, then heard the door open and close.

A few minutes later Mary entered.

"That old person's gone out into the snow," she said. "He wouldn't stay; he said he was seeking work."

. . . . . .

All this happened a week ago, and many times I thought of the sad old man, wondering if he had found work. To-day I have seen him again.

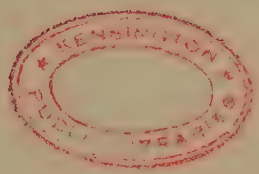
This afternoon I had been down to the bend of the river where the Raven Beck joins the Nidd, to see if I could find my kingfisher or any of his family. Last year at this time I found him where the hazels are. I stood quietly for some time and then, as day was drawing in, turned towards

home. On the steep hill near the Farm of Little People, I saw my old friend; he was heavily laden with parcels, but he looked haler and heartier than he had done last week.

"Good day," he said; "you see I've taken your advice an' found t'work 'at suits me a'most as well as t'owd job; only trouble is when t'mail cart's late; it has a horse with a mind of its own, an' he won't be pushed on hills; when t'mail cart's late, it throws me out summat awful, but I doän't complain for, as you know, I've been parcel-carryin' all my days an' I'll go on while t'end. I'll tell you why I was smiling to mysen just now: I've been doing a bit of my owd work at yon farm—the Farm of Little People. There's more childer there than ony one woman can want—profiteering, I call it, ma'am. Well, I've been leaving some of my ain parcels at yon farm, along with His Majesty's mail. Wilta believe! When t'lilest bairn saw all t'girt parcels, she crowed an' put out her bonny wee arms to me and called, 'See, Mother, it's Father Christmas.' I didn't stay too long for fear t'mother might begin asking questions, but it did put heart into me when I heard a bairn greet me again as 'Father Christmas.'"

With a cheery nod he climbed the intake. Ah! how I hope many another bairn will hold out its arms and give him his old, loving name this Yuletide!

DALE CAROL



AND MONY SHEPHERDS CAME

DALE CAROL

WHEN t'wind was full of woe,
A Child was born
In a byre. Thick fell t'snow
In t'village street
That Christmas morn;
But inside t'byre was reet
For Joseph made all neat.
" We're nobbut tramps and none are glad
To take us in, sweet wife and Lad."

And mony shepherds came
From far-off dales
To see if He would frame
At minding sheep.
Hearing sich tales
Told about t'Bairn asleep
They came tho' t'drifts were deep.
" He is so mild, thi bonnie Child,
And shepherds' lives are rough and wild."

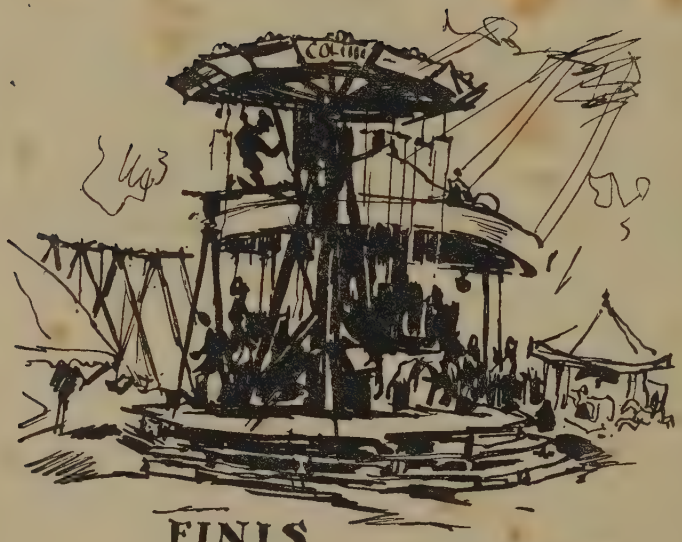
Then three wise kings, star-led,
They came to view
A tiny King a-bed,
Who their hearts won.
Fine fairings, too,
They brought, and when they'd gone
Our Mary kissed her Son,
" *Thoo art so lile, my luvely Doy,*[1]
Yet big enow to bring girt joy."

[1] Dale dim. for Darling.

FINIS

FINIS

THE Fair is over ; take the road again
Unmindful of the fog or wind or rain,
Loving each day, until for lack of breath
We reach the last break-up that folk call Death :
Why care ? We know some day our Show'll be given
A brave green field within the walls of Heaven.



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